The Change Activist

Carmel McConnell on success in projects

Summer inspiration

It's time to relax, renew and replenish, and I hope this issue of *Project* will give you plenty of food for thought over the summer months. If there's a common thread running throughout, then it's appreciating the broader benefits of the work you do – from cultural projects like the Angel of the North, and those that preserve our heritage at the National Trust, to social projects that rebuild communities after a disaster, like the two APM award-winning projects we cover in Anguilla and Montserrat.

Project management is increasingly appreciated as a critical strategic resource, not only in keeping our businesses resilient but to deliver positive change, both of which we look at in depth within these pages. But it often takes an inspirational individual to lead change, to start a team from scratch (don't forget to read our feature 'Breaking New Ground', where you can read about three professionals who are doing that). Someone we'd like you to meet in our Big Interview – and in case you missed your chance at APM's Change Changes conference in June – is Carmel McConnell MBE, project professional and founder and ex-CEO of charity Magic Breakfast, which gives 220,000 children in the UK a nutritious breakfast every day at school.

McConnell started her project management career at BT at the dawn of the internet, moved to the City and then, as part of her research for her book *Change Activist: Make big things happen fast* (a brilliant summer read), made the horrible discovery that children up the road from where she worked were going to school hungry. She decided to do something about it, packing in her job, remortgaging her house and using her project management skills to get Magic Breakfast moving. Passion is a word that has become so overused in corporate jargon as to have become meaningless, but McConnell is the real deal, and she wants everyone to become passionate about the benefits their projects will bring.

"It's really important to start with the heart," she told me. "The biggest success I've had on projects has been where you've got people excited about it, where they feel, wow, that would be really good," she says.

"Project managers are the great doers of capitalism and are the people who bring change – who've got the ability to get people excited about a bigger outcome." What better food for thought?

Emma De Vita is Editor of *Project*

COVER PHOTOGRAPHY: WILL AMLOT

BEN WRIGHT

Passion is a word that has become so overused in corporate jargon as to have become meaningless, but Carmel McConnell is the real deal

Contents

From agility to activism, this issue of **Project** at a glance

50

Perspectives

34

Features

58

Peer to peer

18

26

42

Offline

On rare occasions, a bold new public building or monument can help spur a kind of cultural rebirth for a town or region. In the case of Gateshead, north-east England, and its surrounding region, the Angel of the North (one of APM's 50 Projects for a Better Future) had just such an effect after its unveiling in 1998. Perhaps the UK's most iconic public art installation, the 20m-high steel angel is situated beside the A1 and is seen by more than one person every second. It has been credited with helping drive change in the wider region, the catalyst for the wider regeneration of Gateshead Quays that led to further projects such as the Gateshead Millennium Bridge.

The selection of the site for the sculpture was symbolic – it stands on top of a former colliery, representing Britain's transition out of the industrial age. Made from Cor-ten steel, the total cost of the Angel was £800,000. Its 54m wingspan is almost the same as a jumbo jet's, and the whole sculpture weighs 200 tonnes. It was built to withstand winds of more than 100mph, with concrete piles 20m deep to anchor it.

Looking back at his creation a quarter of a century on, designer and artist Sir Antony Gormley told the BBC that the Angel was made with "such joy, love and celebration. My part in this was small. It's of and from the people of the North-East, and was made by them. It was entirely the result of working with local people." He recalled his team being able to persuade Highways England that it "wouldn't cause hundreds of people to crash their cars" and remembers people, including politicians, believing the sculpture would "make us a laughing stock. Art is often a political football and it certainly was in this case," Sir Antony said.

The Angel of the North celebrates 25 years

ALAMY

Perspectives

Agile versus agility

Adrian Dooley is a long-time project professional whose views on all things agile are much in demand from the project community

In 45 years in project management, Adrian Dooley has seen many fads appear that later became integrated into the background of good practice. He believes agile will follow that same path. Starting out as a construction project manager, Dooley eventually became involved in developing software applications for construction. In 1984 he set up training and consultancy company The Projects Group. He is the founder of the Praxis Framework, a free online methodology and body of knowledge.

Q How have things developed with agile over the past 20 years?
A In 2001, 17 software developers got together to write the Agile Manifesto, and it was all about software development. There's a perception that agile started with the manifesto, but if we drop the word agile for a moment and talk about agility – the ability to flex and be adaptable on your projects – there are numerous examples and case studies where people have had to stop, rethink, look again at the scope and head off in a slightly different direction – going all the way back to the Pantheon in Rome. So, I think agility has always been there. The only thing that started in 2001 was the hype.

Agility and flexibility are on a continuum. There are different degrees of agility, different degrees of flexibility, whereas 'agile' has become binary. There are these quite heated debates about what agile is or isn't. One of my observations is that because people can't quite pin down what agile is, they resort to the easier thing of defining what it isn't, and that's where waterfall comes from.

Q How useful is it to think of agile in opposition to waterfall?
A My advice would be to stop thinking in terms of agile and waterfall and to think in terms of a continuum of agility. It may sound

> I think agility has always been there. The only thing that started with the Agile Manifesto in 2001 was the hype

very nerdy when I say that agile is an adjective and agility is a noun, but agile was an adjective to describe something you're doing, so agile project management would have meant: "I'm managing my project with agility". When it became a noun – when it became a thing – that's when it became binary. You're either agile or you're not.

We've got to get away from that kind of thinking. I believe strongly that when we're talking about how we want to manage our projects or our programmes, we should be talking about agility, because that gives us a whole spectrum of approaches that we can take not just on a project-by-project basis but on different parts of the project as well.

Agilists talk about agile projects and waterfall projects. Well, for anybody out there who's worked on an engineering project, yes, if you are going to build a bridge, you've got to have the full requirements and specification done before you start digging holes in the ground, but the design work in the early stages of the project will have been done in a very agile way. There will have been multidisciplinary teams going through multiple iterations of the design, working with the client and stakeholders to gradually come to the design which is going to be built. You could have great agility in the design phases and very low agility in the latter phases because, ultimately, the ability to apply agility is down to the cost of change.

Q What's next for agile?
A Ultimately, the profession is better for a lot of this discussion about agility. The next phase that we have to work through is about a lot of those ideas about agility just being absorbed as part of the profession, so that we don't talk about them as being some separate way of managing projects, we just see them as a natural component – as part of the project manager's toolkit.

Listen to APM Podcast's interview with Adrian Dooley on Spotify, Apple or Google

5 lessons learned

Bill Ochs, Project Manager, James Webb Space Telescope, NASA

What are the most important leadership lessons from this pioneering project?

1 Understand your personality. Good leadership is personality driven, but it can vary greatly from person to person. This does not mean one personality type is worse or better, but it is important that an individual leader recognises the type of leader they are and their strengths and weaknesses. We can then try to improve on those weaknesses or have other people on our leadership team that complement our own weaknesses, or a combination of both.

2 Be able to listen. Good leaders will have a vision of what they want to accomplish, but this vision cannot be deaf to the opinions around them. I have always said a good manager needs to have a bartender's ear. It is extremely important to hear those around you on your team and be open minded.

3 Make yourself available. When possible, practise 'management by walking around'. It not only proactively demonstrates that you are available to your team, but also allows you to stop and chat with people you may not normally interact with. It is really amazing the insight you can get.

4 Communicate in times of crisis. During a crisis, it is important to be as transparent with your team as possible. A team deserves to know what is going on. Keeping the team informed of how we were planning on keeping people safe while still making progress in the integration and test of the observatory during COVID-19 was crucial to ensure inclusiveness and provide reassurances. It also motivated people to continue to push forward.

5 Have a sense of humour. When under tremendous pressure, like the Webb telescope project, using humour in staff and technical meetings was an invaluable tool to reduce pressure and stress. It kept people calm and promoted clearer thinking when it came to solving incredibly difficult problems. Humour here is defined as finding it in a particular situation and not about individuals.

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Myth buster: Benefits
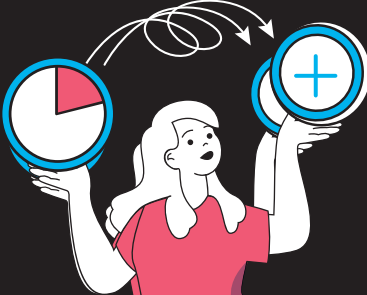
A benefit is a positive and measurable impact of change. Benefits are different to success criteria. They are the quantifiable and measurable improvements resulting from completion of deliverables that are accepted, utilised and perceived as positive by a stakeholder. Benefits typically have a tangible value, ideally expressed in monetary terms to justify the investment. However, it is possible to have a project that fails to deliver the intended benefits but is nevertheless perceived as successful, or vice versa. Benefits management is the identification, definition, planning, tracking and realisation of benefits, and benefits realisation is the practice of ensuring that benefits are derived from outputs and outcomes.

Comment

Toiling for project success in the Channel Islands

Scott Crittell ChPP, who works in special projects in financial services, shares his thoughts on the long history of projects in the Channel Islands

Victor Hugo wrote his 1866 novel *Toilers of the Sea* on (and about) the small island of Guernsey. The novel's heroine, Deruchette, promises to marry the man who can carry out a project that is beset by extreme risk, namely salvaging a ship's steam engine from some nearby rocks. Today the kinds of project happening on Guernsey and Jersey – not to mention smaller Channel Islands such as Alderney and Sark – are less perilous. Hugo came to the Channel Islands partly out of necessity, as an exile from France, but the islands today are inherently attractive destinations, especially for a budding project manager.

The attraction partly lies in the legal set-up. Although the Bailiwicks of Guernsey and Jersey are self-governing Crown Dependencies (they have their own parliaments and laws), they are members of the British-Irish Council and have close political links to Westminster. The islands simultaneously have all the requirements of a central and local government with a wide variety of projects needed to sustain ventures across many sectors. These include construction, farming, telecommunications and financial services.

A few recent examples highlight the range of project-based innovation on the islands. On Jersey, for instance, there is a Harbour Master Plan to connect all harbour areas, and ongoing works to bolster sea defences in response to changing conditions wrought by climate change. Guernsey, moreover, has recently developed the Admiral Park area, producing 67,000 sq ft of office space. In terms of technology, Jersey has hit the headlines by implementing an island-wide 'one gigabyte' architecture for all businesses and homes, putting the island at the top of the World Broadband Speed League in 2021. Guernsey is now undertaking a similar project.

Financial services, meanwhile, is an industry with many types of project on offer. Projects in this sector help to provide for innovative products, as well as compliance with legislation and tax transparency. In practice, this means a variety of projects to ensure compliance with both

APM is now working within the education framework of Jersey and Guernsey to provide access to APM qualifications

local regulations and international directives such as MiFID2 from the European Securities and Markets Authority. The variety of projects and the needs of the financial sector are broad, encompassing accounting, information technology and data protection.

For Hugo, of course, this would have been an alien world. The 19th-century shipping businesses known to Hugo have morphed into the businesses we've come to expect in the 21st century. But there are continuities, too – entrepreneurial foresight and project management skills remain key to success.

So, where next for project management in the Channel Islands? APM is now working within the education framework of Jersey and Guernsey to provide access to APM qualifications, thereby supplementing professional skills in these sectors. APM is also extolling the virtues of membership both individual and corporate, working with the local Institute of Directors, civil service, chamber of commerce and financial regulators.

And people have listened. Recently, the Channel Islands Committee has moved to full branch status within APM, and is no longer a subsidiary of the Wessex branch. This is a key milestone that will foster greater understanding in the Channel Islands of the similarities and differences in project management needs across the islands. In many ways, the islands represent useful microcosms, offering snapshots of forces that play out in the world's larger economies.

Here in the islands, we see more clearly, and often more quickly, what works and what doesn't when it comes to project management and project success. The project management scene in the Channel Islands is bright. With APM nurturing the professionalism and efficacy of project management here, key elements are in place to prepare for and sustain growth in our rapidly changing world.

Scott Crittell ChPP FAPM is a Guernsey-based project professional and a committee member of APM's recently approved Channel Islands branch

Successfully resetting major programmes

Emma Willson, Director, Major Delivery Hub, at the National Audit Office, on why there shouldn't be a reluctance to reset a failing project when this could be the wisest course

In an ideal world, programmes would motor along, powered by a clear vision and plan, delivering what is required to the cost and time intended. But how often do things change or not work first time? Albert Einstein said: "The measure of intelligence is the ability to change." So why, when it is really necessary to make a change to (or reset) a major programme, does resetting have such negative perceptions?

Many of government's largest and riskiest programmes, such as building new schools or IT systems, are complex and take years. We often see government bodies needing to improve how they are managed, particularly in their early stages, with external changes creating further complexities. Internal or external factors can mean a programme will no longer achieve its intended outcomes or make it too costly to do so. Given the negative perception of resets, government bodies may try to resolve unresolvable issues, leading to wasted effort and costs. Recognising the need to undertake a reset early could reduce this waste.

Our March 2023 report on HS2 at Euston station reinforced the value of getting resets right. We found that the government's attempt to reset since 2020 had not succeeded. Even without record levels of inflation, HS2 Euston station costs had increased to a level high enough to prompt the government to reconsider. The latest cost estimate for a 10-platform design was £4.8bn, which is £2.2bn above the allocated budget. Further action was required to develop an affordable and viable station. The Comptroller and Auditor General, as head of the National Audit Office, emphasised that "the March

2023 announcement delaying parts of the HS2 programme should now give DfT and HS2 Ltd the necessary time to put the Euston project on a more realistic and stable footing. However, the deferral of spending to manage inflationary pressures will lead to additional costs and potentially to higher costs overall for the project that will need to be managed closely."

Understanding these trade-offs, such as increased costs, is important for decision-makers assessing

Given the negative perception of resets, government bodies may try to resolve unresolvable issues

whether a reset is the right option. Our recent report, *Lessons Learned: Resetting major programmes*, draws our insights together and provides a practical guide to help decision-makers determine whether to do a reset and how to increase its chances of success.

Resets can be significant and risky. When decision-makers understand that they are carrying out a reset, they can more consciously consider whether they have the

necessary activities and processes to manage risks. The building blocks to a successful reset are the same as those needed for any successful programme. But it can be more challenging to put these in place and get the focus right.

Our insights describe the need to identify quickly whether a reset is the right thing to do by examining management information and having defined checkpoints or specific milestones. A lack of honesty can mean reset triggers are missed – in 2020 we reported that staff leading the Home Office's Digital Services at the Border programme had bred a culture of tightly controlled and manipulated communications, which made it difficult to honestly discuss programme options. The need for the right culture and behaviours is also critical to developing a shared understanding of how a reset will be done.

We also cover the processes and skills that need to be considered. This includes having governance arrangements tailored to the risks and allowing enough time and space, varying with the complexity of the programme or reset. It may take time to: understand the underlying issues and potential opportunities; involve (and potentially rebuild) a supply chain; engage stakeholders, including contractors; or seek programme approvals. We found that the time spent on a reset ranged from under three months to over a year.

Considering how these insights apply to your programmes may increase the chances of success.

The NAO report *Lessons Learned: Resetting major programmes* can be found at bit.ly/3pBuopT

Comment

The AI-driven project revolution is already here

No longer science fiction, AI is already causing significant changes in project management, write Antonio Nieto-Rodriguez and Ricardo Viana Vargas

AI language models like ChatGPT are revolutionising how projects are managed. By analysing large amounts of data, automating tasks and offering real-time insights, AI will soon help project managers be more efficient, make better decisions and improve project outcomes. AI offers several advantages. One of the most significant is the amount of time saved. Through automating administrative tasks like scheduling and data entry, project managers can save up to 20% of their time.

In addition, these technologies will improve project outcomes by providing more accurate data analysis and insights. Project managers can make better decisions and increase success rates by leveraging AI. For instance, a PwC study found that using AI to analyse project data can lead to a 15% increase in project success rates. AI language models will also enhance risk management. By analysing large amounts of data from diverse sources, project managers can identify potential risks and take proactive measures to mitigate them.

Another advantage we will see is increased efficiency. Gartner has found that project managers can reduce project costs by up to 10% by optimising resource allocation. This enables organisations to complete projects more quickly and with fewer resources, which will be a huge relief to the exponential growth of projects in organisations worldwide. In addition, an Accenture study indicates that AI language models can increase team productivity by up to 25% by providing real-time communication and collaboration tools among project team members. This helps team members work more

effectively together, regardless of their location or time zone.

Companies are already implementing AI models in their project management. Siemens uses AI to analyse project data and identify potential issues before they become major problems, resulting in more efficient project completion with fewer cost overruns. Bechtel, a construction company, uses AI to analyse project data and identify cost savings and efficiency improvement opportunities. Similarly, IBM and Microsoft are

Project managers must keep themselves updated with the latest advancements and adjust their skills

developing AI-powered project management tools.

As AI continues to transform our profession, project managers will need to develop new skills, including:

1 Data analysis and interpretation. With AI language models providing more data and insights than ever, project managers must be skilled at identifying trends and analysing and interpreting data to make better-informed decisions.

2 Communication and collaboration. Project managers will need to be skilled at using real-time communication tools to facilitate collaboration and communication.

3 Strategic planning and risk management. With AI language models providing more accurate risk analysis and insights, project managers will need to be skilled at strategic planning and risk management.

4 Technical knowledge. With AI language models becoming increasingly complex, project managers will need to understand the technical aspects of AI, including machine learning algorithms and natural language processing.

5 Adaptability. With AI language models evolving rapidly, project managers must be adaptable and open to change. This will require a willingness to learn new skills, experiment with new tools and be open to new ideas and approaches.

AI is not science fiction any longer. It is already revolutionising the way projects are executed by delivering time savings, better project results, improved risk management, increased efficiency and better communication and collaboration. Project managers must step up and keep themselves updated with the latest technological advancements and adjust their skills to increase the value delivered to their organisations.

Antonio Nieto-Rodriguez **is founder of the Strategy Implementation Institute. Ricardo Viana Vargas is former Director for Infrastructure and Project Management at the UN.**

POPTIKA/SHUTTERSTOCK

Not all change is improvement and that's why we need benefits management

Hugo Minney, Chair of APM's Benefits and Value Specific Interest Group, on the benefits that benefits management brings in itself

All improvement requires change, but not all change is improvement. That's where benefits management comes in. Benefits don't happen by themselves – it isn't enough to do something and expect that change will stick and that the world will be a better place. Benefits have to be managed before, during and after delivery of a project. And benefits management itself brings benefits – to do the right thing in the right way and to do it well.

To apply benefits management, we need to start with a vision developed and enriched with stakeholders who engage with that vision. What we choose to do and, perhaps more importantly, what we choose not to do or to stop doing, is the real power of benefits management. It provides the evidence to focus finite resources where they will make the most difference – either on a single change or on a portfolio of changes, because

that's where the real benefits to society will come. It identifies (some of the) negative consequences of change, or dis-benefits.

Too many projects start with a decision to proceed and retrospectively assemble a benefits team to justify the decision. This misses the point – until we know what a project is 'worth', we probably

If the timescale for benefits realisation is too generous, there will be no urgency to do the planning

won't look at the range of options to choose the best. And if the 'benefits' don't mean much to stakeholders, they could undermine the work of the delivery team or negate the proposed change. Most change involves asking people to change processes or behaviours. Changes that affect the

planet depend on consumer choice and on the behaviours of people who could, for example, make a video call instead of jumping on an aeroplane.

Planning is the phase of a project's life cycle that most people associate with benefits management. This phase is often beset by optimism bias and tunnel vision, where leaders seek confirmation of their first decision and ignore evidence to the contrary.

The reality is that planning benefits involves a lot of work with stakeholders. A project might deliver a transport link, but it's the communities at either end that change their behaviours, zone their commercial activities and invest in entrepreneurship – that will create and subsequently realise benefits. And without planning, this might take years or decades. If the timescale for benefits realisation is too generous, there will be no urgency to do the planning and the people responsible will be retired and replaced before the day of reckoning.

Crossrail Project 2019–23

Reflecting on the key themes and the changes made to the governance arrangements of the Crossrail project from 2018, the Crossrail learning legacy by TfL and DfT, published by APM, identifies three important lessons for other infrastructure projects and programmes with many organisational interfaces over a long period of time.

1 **Governance arrangements should be established early on.** These should be codified to reflect assumptions about how the project or programme will unfold. Sponsors cannot predict the future and need to be open to reflect how their interpretation may need to evolve over the delivery life cycle. This evolution does not mean that the governance arrangements need to be replaced – rather that the parties jointly agree to revise processes and relationships

or refresh membership and terms of reference of meetings.

2 **Identify desired impacts of governance changes.** The changes should be identified to align with the interests of the sponsor and reflect the risks applicable to the sponsor organisation(s). This will ensure that there is appropriate oversight aligned to the priorities of the accountable organisation(s) to provide confidence that risks

Coming back after project delivery is all very well, but it's too late to change anything by that point

Once the business case is approved and delivery begins, many organisations stand down their benefits management efforts. Benefits only happen after realisation and only need modelling in advance of the project – that's true, isn't it? As any experienced project manager knows, projects are about encountering obstacles and seeking to find ways to keep the project on track. The choice is around what 'on track' actually means.

Are we content to stumble from milestone to milestone, receiving plaudits for managing to reach each one within cost/time/quality/ scope tolerance? Or are we looking for something more, examining each decision for its impact on the overall benefits realised from the project or how it contributes to the objectives of the portfolio. This second route takes a lot more thinking but might use less resource overall for a much more satisfactory result, for much more benefit to society (and profit, if that's the benefit you seek) and fewer, better-managed negative consequences.

Lead indicator metrics provide the information to make advance decisions – decisions to change the scope or delivery of the project (within the context of the portfolio and other projects). Lead metrics show a direction of travel at a point in project delivery where we can still make changes that will impact the lag metrics of actual benefit realised over time.

Coming back after project delivery is all very well, but it's too late to change anything by that point. Well, it's almost too late. We advocate using lead metrics because the information from these can inform changes during project delivery, when there's still time to change the delivery. But post-closure review is also important, as long as it has teeth.

So how long should you monitor benefits after delivery of a project and the handover of its outputs? The British Standard on benefits management says we should monitor the realisation of benefits until we have confidence in the extent they will be realised. Not until they are realised, only until the pattern is obvious. Benefits realised (and confidence in benefits realisation) should be the focus of post-project governance.

We need to get beyond thinking of benefits management as an activity during planning and an afterthought to 'hold people to account', and consider the benefits of benefits management itself.

are being managed to meet delivery and cost commitments and ultimately deliver the intended outcomes of the investment. The needs of the project should also be considered to ensure that the governance arrangements support rather than burden the delivery teams. A common purpose should be established where both sponsor and delivery teams benefit from the material produced to support the discussions at the meetings.

3 The operation of a joint sponsorship model requires review and adjustment as working arrangements and interests change.
A joint sponsorship model was identified for the Crossrail project to ensure that the interests of the main sponsoring and funding organisations were reflected in the development of the project. Although the joint sponsorship model was replaced in 2020 with two separate sponsorship teams, strong relationships remained to ensure visibility of priorities, interests and risks. Sponsors focused on instilling the right behaviours and culture within and between the two organisations and recognised that, with the closure of the Sponsor Board, there was a need to find a new way to work together to support the remaining delivery of the project. Common areas were identified where the two sponsorship teams could continue to support each other, including public engagement, assurance reviews, completion certificates, lessons learned and benefits management. Where interests were different, additional effort was required to clearly communicate respective priorities so that engagement occurred at the appropriate levels in the organisation.

Crossrail Project 2019 to 2023: Completing the Elizabeth Line **can be downloaded at apm.org.uk**

Professor Adam Boddison

The customer isn't always right, but they do have rights...

APM's Chief Executive on what it means to serve customers

In my early career I had multiple roles spanning fundraising, sales and service delivery – the latter was mainly in factories. Irrespective of the role, there was one overriding mantra that came up again and again: 'the customer is always right'. So when a complaint came in, the default position was to simply provide the customer with what they were asking for and to tell them what they wanted to hear.

I then became a teacher, where the 'customers' are arguably the pupils and their parents. The fact that teaching is a profession meant there was a much greater willingness to defend a position underpinned by professional judgement and expertise. I saw a shift away from 'the customer is always right' to 'the customer has rights'.

The latter part of my career has been spent leading professional bodies and membership associations. In these roles, the professional identity was stronger still, with a further bias towards 'having rights' over 'being right'. This begs an interesting question about whether there is any causation underpinning the correlation between professionalisation and customers' rights.

In membership associations, it makes sense to think of the members as the customers, which is why there is often a focus on the value proposition for membership grades. However, the reality is that members are not the only set of customers.

Let me use my current role to demonstrate the point. APM
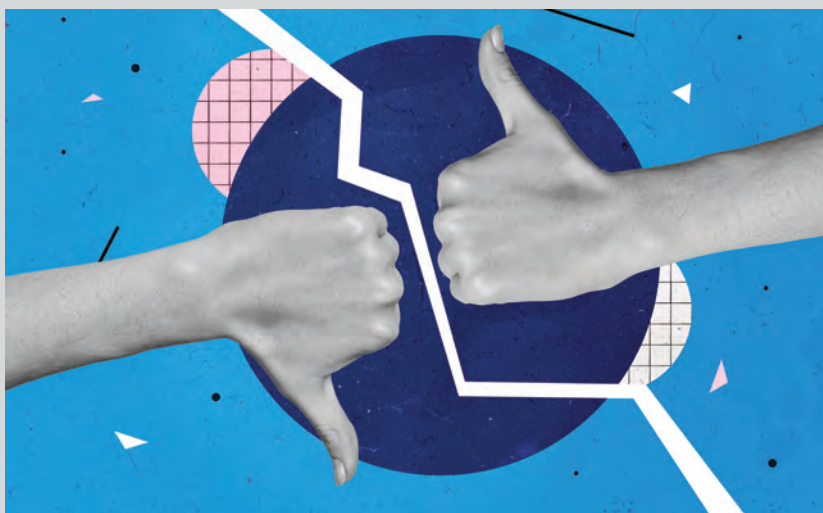
Delivering projects in a way that is inclusive and respects people is not just morally right, but it actually improves project delivery

has multiple identities. Yes, it is a membership association, but it is also a professional body, a registered charity and a company, as well as having a royal charter. Each of these identities lends itself to a different set of customers. For example, as a registered charity, APM exists to provide a public benefit, so arguably the general public are our customers. A critic of this view might suggest that, to be a customer, one must be paying for a service. In that case, APM has multiple B2B customer sets spanning government departments, corporates and accredited training providers.

Whichever way you look at it, the customer sets and

stakeholder groups for APM are complex. In many ways, this should not be a surprise given the complexity of the project profession itself. Indeed, projects can have the very same challenge in identifying who the customer is. Is it the individual/organisation commissioning the project, since they are paying? Or perhaps it is the beneficiaries of the project as they are receiving the service?

The concept of customer rights in projects is essential. Delivering projects in a way that is inclusive and respects people is not just morally right, but it actually improves project delivery. This was exemplified in a piece of research commissioned by APM and conducted by the University of Southampton, *Dynamic Conditions for Project Success*, which identified diversity as one of the conditions.

It is inevitable that project professionals will face moral dilemmas at some point in

Dennis Lock
APM Honorary Fellow (1929–2023)

Dennis Lock, born on 15 September 1929 in London, died peacefully at his home on 6 May 2023. Dennis will be remembered for his extraordinary body of writing. The first edition of his seminal textbook, *Project Management*, was published in the late 1960s and is now in its 10th edition.

Dennis had a career of exceptionally wide management and industrial experience, ranging from the manufacture of sub-miniature electronic assemblies to giant machine-tool projects. He worked in defence, heavy engineering and mining. Most recently he lectured in project management for Southampton and Surrey universities.

His final book, *The Practitioner Handbook of Project Controls*, which he co-edited with Shane Forth, was published in 2021. Perhaps his crowning achievement was as an editor of definitive multi-author references both in the field of project and programme management and on general management, including several volumes of Gower's flagship *Handbook of Management*, and the first editor of the *Gower Handbook of Project Management*.

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their careers, and reflecting on customer rights at such times can be helpful in successfully navigating these challenges. This inevitability is one of the reasons why ChPP includes a focus on ethics.

I am reminded of the multiple times in my career where doing the right thing has been the choice fraught with the most difficulty and risk. On one occasion doing what was right rather than what was easy required me to put my own job on the line. However, it worked out well in the end and resulted in an acceleration of my personal and professional integrity.

While I have argued that the customer is not always right, I do think the philosophy underpinning the idea that the customer is always right is valuable. The premise of wanting to solve customers' problems and to maintain a good reputation is sound and can be achieved in the absence of validity judgements that say the customer is right or wrong. For example, if a customer has a poor opinion about a product or service, it would be easy to dismiss this as their (wrong) perception. But, as a colleague of mine has often said: "Perception is their reality."

My values as a leader rely on trust with both colleagues and customers. Both groups are often right and both definitely have rights. I see my role as ensuring that rights are understood and respected. It's not just the right thing to do, it also produces the right outcomes.

SHUTTERSTOCK

APM Trustee elections 2023

Board nominations open on 17 July

APM Full and Fellow members with diverse skills, backgrounds and experience are invited to put themselves forward to serve on the APM Board. This year's trustee ballot nominations open on Monday 17 July and will see three new members elected. Eligibility for voting is restricted to MAPM and FAPM members only.

As the chartered body for the project profession, APM is committed to developing and promoting the value of project management to deliver improved project outcomes for the benefit of society. The APM Board of elected trustees plays a vital role in developing APM's strategy and supporting the organisation to succeed. APM recognises that diversity of thought is important in improving decision-making and outcomes, and is keen to see a diverse mix of characteristics and skills on the Board. Candidates are welcome from a broad range of backgrounds, sectors, experiences, stages of career, project disciplines and organisations.

Milla Mazilu, APM Board Chair, said: "Serving on the Board is a terrific opportunity to give back to your profession and to APM. We continue to attract great candidates and I have enjoyed the role tremendously. I do encourage you to look out for the briefings in July and give the opportunity serious thought."

Applications are welcome from high-calibre candidates who can demonstrate a robust commitment to professional ethics and integrity, as well as the competencies needed to be a board member – including a focus on strategic contributions. Experience as a non-executive director is beneficial but not essential, as training will be provided.

The deadline for nominations is Wednesday 6 September at 5pm. Full and Fellow members will receive further instructions and guidance via email.

PIECING PARADISE BACK TOGETHER

AS AN INDIVIDUAL WORKING ON A TOUGH REHABILITATION PROGRAMME, SURELY THERE IS NOTHING MORE MOTIVATING THAN SEEING THE SOCIAL BENEFITS THAT YOU ARE HELPING TO DELIVER. RICHARD YOUNG SPEAKS TO TWO PROFESSIONALS IN THE CARIBBEAN WHO ARE DOING JUST THAT

As well as being the stuff of dreams, the Caribbean can also be the stuff of nightmares. The islands of Anguilla and Montserrat have both experienced devastating natural disasters. Anguilla is vulnerable to hurricanes and in 2017 was at the mercy of Hurricane Irma, which ripped across its islands. Over two decades earlier, in 1995, the volcanic island of Montserrat suffered a massive volcanic eruption that has rendered two-thirds of the country uninhabitable. As you might imagine, both British Overseas Territories were left on their knees, needing not only to get essential services up and running again but, more than that, to find a way to improve on what existed before. With both territories' APM-award winning redevelopment programmes, the focus was – and is – on delivering life-changing social benefits.

ANGUILLA
WINDS OF CHANGE

The islands of Anguilla have a turbulent political history. After the wave of decolonisation, islanders rejected a federation with Saint Kitts and Nevis, then conducted a low-key revolution in 1967, returning themselves to British responsibility in 1980. Political upheavals didn't prevent highly successful tourism and financial services sectors from enriching the island. In 2014, its nominal GDP was $311m – for a population of about 15,000.

But relative economic success couldn't spare the islands from the region's dramatic weather systems. And on 6 September 2017 Hurricane Irma became the first-ever category five hurricane to hit the Leeward Islands. It smashed into Anguilla, damaging homes, offices, the harbour and communications (including the island's air traffic control systems). Damage costing between $190m and $290m badly hit the island's economy and social services. Most significantly for inhabitants, it tore apart the island's main hospital.

In 2018, the project to return essential social services – from emergency care to day-to-day medical treatments – became in part the responsibility of the Health Authority and the Government of Anguilla, where Conlloyd Gumbs served as one of their project managers. "I'd been a teacher in Anguilla, but I was always interested in technology and wanted to train as a medical engineer, so I'd gone to university in Bradford,"

Gumbs explains. A year-long stint at IBM and an internship at Rolls-Royce cemented his engineering experience – but as a result of civic duty, he decided to head home in 2017, returning to teach maths.

Before he could get back, Irma hit. "It was a shock because you see all the places you knew as a kid damaged, and for months we didn't have any electricity," he recalls. "That means no light, no running water, no internet, unless you can find somewhere with a generator." A year later, he'd been recruited by the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) to work as a project manager – part of the team rebuilding healthcare facilities on the island.

Without a fully functioning hospital, getting sick was suddenly very serious for islanders. "You would always hear the facilities team talking about running around looking for diesel for the hospital's generators," Gumbs says. "Inside the building itself, there was so much damage that it looked like a bomb had dropped. And a clinic a lot of people relied on in East End on the island had to be closed for internal repairs."

The project – which won the 2022 APM Award for Social Project of the Year – was (and is) part of the Anguilla Programme, run by Darren Forbes-Batey in conjunction with the Governor's Office team. (The Governor at the time was Tim Foy – who took office just a month before Irma made landfall.) The Anguilla Programme Board is made up

of ministers, civil servants and project experts, charged with decisions on prioritisation and phasing, as well as budgeting. With so many projects – such as the Blowing Point port terminal, a new House of Assembly, a post office, five primary schools as well as major renovations to the Princess Alexandra Hospital and two clinics – this was no small task.

For Gumbs, working in the healthcare project, the first step was working with medical staff to evaluate project scope and define deliverables. He quickly realised that understanding the technicalities of the medical equipment wasn't the main part of the job – project management skills were. "Procurement processes were a big part of it," he says. "When I started, I had no idea even what a requisition was – and the acronyms were a mystery."

But Gumbs is a fast learner and acquired knowledge quickly from the project teams around him. "There was frustration – we knew where we wanted to be, so we had to learn in stages… but quickly," he says. "I asked a lot of questions and read up as much as possible how to get it right." His teaching

"It was a shock because you see all the places you knew as a kid damaged, and for months we didn't have any electricity. That means no light, no running water, no internet, unless you can find somewhere with a generator"

Conlloyd Gumbs

"We have concrete structures now, which gives us so much more reassurance that we have a better chance of being more resilient for a future storm"

Main: The new dialysis unit under construction. Inset and above: The Central Polyclinic.

experience made a difference: "As a teacher you have to identify strengths and weaknesses in the skills and abilities of individuals in your class, in order to give everyone what they need to get to where they need to go. Similarly, as a project manager, you deal with so many people with different skills and abilities that you have to be able to identify how you can best assist each professional so that they can have the relevant resources and information to get their individual jobs done."

A clear focus on the social benefits of the programme helped him focus. "Even with equipment starting to arrive, we needed to get the hospital itself up and running so it could be housed properly, all the while meeting a 24/7 need for care," he says. "So we split the project into phases, ensuring we could work on different parts of the property while treatment was still happening elsewhere."

There's real pride when Gumbs talks about the social good that his projects have accomplished. The hospital and clinics are better than ever – with improved flooring, new antibacterial ceilings, a new storage building, an extended laboratory, theatre room and A&E building, and a new dialysis and isolation unit at the hospital; as well as new clinical, dental and physiotherapy facilities at the Central Polyclinic. The Welches Polyclinic at the eastern end of the island was partially renovated – and the brand-new South Hill Polyclinic at the western end, along with the other facilities, has been a big win for the islanders. The COVID-19 pandemic hit halfway through these other projects – and the team was able to expand the lab facilities for testing on the island as a discrete project.

"We have concrete structures now, which gives us so much more reassurance that we have a better chance of being more resilient for a future storm," Gumbs says. But he also learned a huge amount about project management. "One of the biggest things is treating each issue as a serious one," he says. "Work it when it emerges, deal with it to avoid it biting you later on. I am a firm believer in putting out fires when they're small."

Time management has also been a critical factor in project success – including treating other people's time with respect. And Gumbs reckons listening properly is the biggest secret of all. "Whether it's sponsors [like the FCDO] or stakeholders, listen – you can pick up what they really want, you can start to tell what's critical and what's not," he says. "That's so important if you're going to get people what they need. I'm part of this society, I use these services. I want everyone to understand what great outcomes look like and how to get to them. That also means explaining the priorities on the ground to sponsors, helping them prioritise well, which comes through trying to clearly understand the needs of everyone involved."

Gumbs reflects that, "The adoption of new practices that were inspired by APM was instrumental in guiding our project management team. After the destruction caused to our health facilities by Hurricane Irma, the Anguilla Programme's funding helped to give us a new start. We were able to guide funding bodies, project managers, health professionals, customers, the public, and contributing departments. It was a crash course for an entire nation on the importance of project management."

He has also been back to one of the island's primary schools to talk about his new career as a project manager. "I did a presentation with them on the steps taken in project management skills by walking them through the stages of a potential new school canteen from start to finish, just to give them perspective on the different stages, challenges and joys of the project management cycle on how you make better decisions," he says. Just one more social good from project management: passing on awareness of the craft to the next generation.

MONTSERRAT
VOLCANIC CHANGE

About 110 miles south-east of Anguilla sits another British Overseas Territory of about the same size, Montserrat. On 18 July 1995, the previously dormant Soufrière Hills volcano, in the southern part of the island, became active. The capital, Plymouth, was destroyed; the southernmost two-thirds of the island remain an exclusion zone 28 years later. A glance at Google Maps illustrates the devastation – huge deltas of ash and mud emanating from the volcanic peak dominate the otherwise lush landscape.

For the remote islanders there was a risk that the newly active volcano would spell the end of their entire way of life. Two-thirds of Montserratians were forced to flee over the next two years and the population dropped to just 1,200 by 1997. There followed years of response and recovery, when multiple programmes were put in place to look at development within Montserrat. While many strides to rebuild have been made, delivery of some infrastructure priorities has been slower than envisaged; and the need to focus on local capability building and strengthening in project management was identified.

Then, in 2019, the Government of Montserrat (GOM) took a key step: alongside a new investment programme for resilient economic growth, its Ministry of Finance set up a new programme management office (PMO) that is now supporting it to deliver a major portfolio of UK-funded redevelopment. Martin Parlett was hired as its head. "This new phase of capital investment presented a fresh opportunity to change the way in which we plan, deliver and operationalise our projects – while building maturity, experience and confidence into our change management practices," he says.

"Montserrat may be geographically small, but the scale of transformation, ambition and impact is considerable. Delivering social and economic benefits in this high-risk, uber-constrained and essentially post-disaster environment meant that we had to hit the ground running with a new approach, improved governance and reporting, and a focus on benefits realisation and value," he explains.

It has done that by working closely with ministry delivery teams across the GOM. The island's population is back up to around 5,000 (one aim of the reconstruction projects is attracting back more of the Montserratian diaspora). But even at that size, the island has dedicated government teams working hard to build back better. "All the major portfolio projects are supported by the PMO," explains Parlett, "but we play a different role in each one."

Results were fast – the team has already become a source of insight and learning for the broader profession, and even won the 2020 APM PMO of the Year Award. The range of projects is impressive – including resurfacing the island's runway; building a new port facility; a new hospital; exploiting undersea fibre-optic cabling; making the island energy independent; and attracting new investment. "There's a huge diversity of projects, so the PMO tailors its contribution," Parlett says. "We're there to adaptively support the individual ministries as they get on with the work. We can be a voice for stakeholder interests, evaluate risk levels, help manage funding, and offer governance advice and decision support."

When the PMO was set up in 2019, the team's first mission was to sort out the project planning cycle. Deputy Head of the PMO, Montserratian Linda Dias, explains: "That's where projects in the past that maybe hadn't been through a traditional cycle had struggled. Now we can act as a lens for the GOM

Martin Parlett

> "We're there to adaptively support the individual ministries as they get on with the work. We can be a voice for stakeholder interests, evaluate risk levels, help manage funding, and offer governance advice and decision support"

Main: Montserrat's lush terrain was partly decimated by a volcanic eruption in 1995. Inset: The Government of Montserrat PMO team.

and the Foreign and Commonwealth Development Office (FCDO) decision-makers to provide assurance about how projects are performing, and the development of business cases. It's all about giving trust in delivery – and when you do deliver, that raises everyone's confidence levels for future investment opportunities, too."

That made quick wins important – 'oven ready' projects where local stakeholders and project managers within ministries could learn from any external resource coming into the island, as well as immediately improving infrastructure and services.

Then there were a lot of long-awaited projects where the PMO was able to overlay formalised project proposal language and documentation to get different agencies aligned. A lot of the

"Montserrat may be geographically small, but the scale of transformation, ambition and impact is considerable"

work is run through the GOM's Capital Investment Programme for Resilient Economic Growth – and the team has been able to provide formal business cases and governance structures to projects, supporting sponsorship – and commercial entities looking for an investment case for the island.

And with most of the ministry-based project managers having business-as-usual duties, the PMO team can offer day-to-day support as well as

spread project management disciplines and skills: "We use projects to pilot new project management techniques," Parlett says.

But injecting project management disciplines and making a concrete case for Montserrat projects with the financial backers (including those in the FCDO) is only half the story on such a small island. "Everyone is a stakeholder here, in every project," says Parlett. "Everyone is going to use the hospital at some point in their lives. Even those in the diaspora will look at each project on the island as a potential reason to return." That makes the programme management team, in part, an "on-the-ground conscience" for projects, ensuring investments maximise outcomes for islanders and long-term sustainability.

A good example of that is the sequencing work the government adopted for the various healthcare projects on the island under the Ministry of Health and Social Services. Clearly, building the hospital is a priority. "But the team wanted to make healthcare benefits available to people as soon as possible," explains Parlett. "So, with UK funding and support, we brought forward and resourced sub-projects for mammography, CT scanning and critical neo-natal care equipment on the island."

It was a shrewd calculation. On one level, shifting the project sequencing delivers a crucial benefit to the islanders.

Focusing on diagnostics means less worry for them if they develop complaints; and limits expensive trips to larger healthcare facilities on other islands if there's no treatment required. "But it also builds momentum behind the broader healthcare programme," says Parlett. "It means people are trained sooner, helping transform the workforce; we can roll out healthcare information systems sooner; and the healthcare environment will be operational much more quickly when the infrastructure is complete."

It's a vivid illustration of the social value that project management disciplines can bring: ensuring good governance, financial accountability and risk management; while at the same time, maintaining a focus on sustainability and social benefits. The island experience reminds us: far from being mutually exclusive, these are inseparable components of good, holistic project management.

The town of Little Bay, still under construction, is intended to be Montserrat's future capital

LESSONS FROM ISLAND LIFE

Two quite different disasters, but two stories of project management accelerating recovery and helping people plan more securely for the future. But there are common themes from Anguilla and Montserrat when it comes to delivering programmes with real, life-changing social benefits...

1 Quick wins are key. Perhaps learning from old crises, the FCDO was quick to act in Anguilla (even though the island was running off generators for months). In Montserrat, the larger scale of the disaster dented confidence in the island's ability to rebuild – but fast action by the new PMO has injected momentum.

2 Discipline and passion are not exclusive. The instinct in a crisis is to pitch in however possible; emotions run high when people lack basic services. Conlloyd Gumbs' experience shows that methodically (if quickly) learning the right way to do projects delivers better results. On Montserrat, no one doubted the desire of the GOM to make lives better – but adding the PMO's fresh approach to project discipline is delivering results for them.

3 Project sequencing matters. On both islands, project teams were able to secure immediate wins for their stakeholders ahead of the major project coming to fruition. In both cases, it was healthcare where sequencing made a huge difference – but the same applies in other fields. Montserrat's core economic functions are back up and running – but the smart project to bring affordable fibre-optic internet to the island early lays the groundwork for future investment and meets islander needs.

4 Good governance is the best PR. Both these islands are small communities; both needed significant funding from the FCDO to undertake their rebuilding projects. Being able to demonstrate strong project accountability massively boosts confidence in the work – and is the ideal way to convince sponsors to keep going.

5 Skin in the game. Gumbs is a perfect 'accidental' project manager: he knows the environment, he has strong innate skills, he's a fast learner... and he has a personal stake in the projects. Commitment was never going to be in doubt – and, like Parlett, he's never going to let the project benefits be lost. In small communities, the stakeholder experience is vivid – as it should be on all projects.

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BREAKING NEW GROUND

PROJECT MANAGEMENT AND ITS PROFESSIONALS ARE INCREASINGLY ENTERING NEW TERRITORY, WHETHER IT'S THE WORLD OF COSMETICS, MEDIA OR GENEALOGY. DAVE WALLER REPORTS

When the *Ever Given*, one of the world's largest cargo ships, ran aground in the Suez Canal in 2021, it revealed a glaring weakness in global supply chains. The vessel blocked the key trade route for a week and caused close to $10bn of lost business in just one day. That evening, Kate Redrup, Portfolio Delivery Manager at cosmetics brand Liz Earle, saw the incident unfolding on the news. "I got this sinking feeling," she says. "I knew this was going to impact us, but I didn't know how."

It soon became clear. Liz Earle had designed a set of bespoke gift bags to feature in a weekend special on the QVC shopping channel. It was a major promotion. The show had been planned a year in advance and had a fixed date to air. Those bags were now stranded thousands of miles from Liz Earle's head office in Ryde, Isle of Wight. "You can't pack a gift off if you're missing one element of it," Redrup says. "But there was nothing we could do by that point."

Everything and everywhere

People may not see the fast-moving consumer goods (FMCG) sector as a typical home for project management. But the discipline is now everywhere, from FMCG to online businesses and media agencies. In FMCG, project professionals may find themselves streamlining product development, improving supply-chain efficiency, sharpening marketing campaigns and creating better customer service experiences.

And the Suez story suggests they're dealing with disruption as challenging as any.

BEN WRIGHT

Redrup has since moved roles. She's now Portfolio Delivery Manager in Liz Earle's gifting wing. So is she now running projects with lower stakes? Not quite. Liz Earle launches a seasonal gift campaign in September, shipping 60 million stock components, from lipsticks to wash bags, around the world – with the immovable deadline of Christmas.

So, how does project management work in fast-moving sectors with such

> **"When I started, the role was quite chaotic. But it excited me to go in with a clean slate. I could decide what the project management framework should look like"**

potential for disruption? Redrup breaks down her approach. RAID logs provide written evidence for the thought process behind every decision and action, as they list all the inherent risks and issues. Trackers become incredibly useful when dealing with disparate teams in charge of hundreds of product lines, each of which has to be tweaked to suit the specific local culture and regulations of the different markets to which they're being shipped.

And when you suddenly find key suppliers unable to complete vital tasks – such as printing gift boxes in the run-up to Valentine's Day – stakeholder engagement becomes incredibly important. "There's

nothing worse than going into a meeting and saying you've got bad news that you don't know how to fix," says Redrup, recalling a 'great learning curve'. "These days I'll ask our subject matter experts for support early, so I can prepare the key details to share in the meeting. I can then present the bad news, and set out the options: one is going to take longer to launch; one will cost more money; and the other means scaling back on the claims we're making. The key thing is to give key stakeholders the full story, so they can support in making decisions and escalating."

Back to your roots

In November, when Charlotte Bowerman interviewed for a marketing job at Ancestry.com, she saw the potential to be part of something meaningful – helping people to join the dots in their family history and potentially connect with estranged or unknown relatives.

She could also see it wasn't a typical project management role. There was no physical product. She would be running major ad campaigns – like a brand awareness drive tying in with King Charles III's coronation. She'd be managing agencies and briefing the production team on software and coding changes, as well as shaping emails going out to customers.

Ancestry's international marketing department had never had a project manager before. So if she got the job, she'd have a far broader remit. "In the interview they used terms like 'unstructured' and they weren't lying," she says. "When I started, the role was quite chaotic. But it excited me to go in with a clean

Kate Redrup

3 WAYS FOR PROJECT PROFESSIONALS TO EXPLAIN WHAT THEY DO

Project professionals who find themselves bringing the function into less typical sectors may have to explain their role, and the wider project function, to their new colleagues. Here are three tips on getting the message across.

1 Be visible. Speak to as many people as you can from across the organisation so you can answer their queries and dispel any fears. You can also canvass opinion on how the company is actually operating – what's working, what's not, what needs to be discussed and how things may change. People love to feel listened to and will get an even bigger boost seeing the project team acting on the issues they care about.

2 Do what's right for you. Work out what project management means for your organisation and where it can add value quickly. People need to see that any change is coming from the right place. "There's a danger in grabbing the handbook and trying to apply it all in one go," says Dan Jennings. "Pick what works for you and figure out how you can create effective ways of working."

3 Keep it simple. "Don't try to bamboozle people with methodologies and terminology," says Charlotte Bowerman. "Not everyone needs or wants to see under the hood." Instead of niche terminology and project speak, focus on the information they need for their role in the project at hand.

BEN WRIGHT

"I'm trying the strategy of listening to absolutely everybody and anybody who'll speak to me to find out how things are done"

slate. I could decide what the project management framework should look like and what processes we'd need in place to enable it to happen."

Bowerman quickly realised that much of her role would come down to change management. Effective communication would be her strongest tool. "Being a new arrival has given me a clean slate to come in and ask about all the challenges," she says. "I'm trying the strategy of listening to absolutely everybody and anybody who'll speak to me to find out how things are done and how they could be done differently. I've had loads of one-to-ones with stakeholders, trying to understand what their frustrations are. And to make sure people know who I am and what they can come to me for."

Anyone playing a similar role can expect to spend some time convincing colleagues of the value of project management. Many will have functioned perfectly well without it, laying the foundations for certain processes without the need for dedicated project management training, terminology and techniques. This can create barriers.

Overcoming resistance

"There is always resistance to change," says Bowerman. "Even if people know it's the right thing, they may have been operating differently for a long time. But overall, people here seem overwhelmingly grateful to have someone to help them by taking away some of the work around structure and putting frameworks in place."

The perception issue is something Dan Jennings has experienced too. He is responsible for establishing a project management office (PMO) at the UK wing of Wavemaker, the global media agency.

His team has worked on everything from Evian campaigns tied to the Wimbledon tennis tournament to

Charlotte Bowerman

delivering product placement within *Married at First Sight* on Channel 4. And as those creative projects have become more complex, whether through multi-platform content partnerships or the arrival of channels such as smart speakers and WhatsApp, project management skills have become even more in demand.

By building a central PMO function, Wavemaker's specialist project managers are able to add even more value and skills both to its client-led projects and its own internal initiatives.

When Jennings first started at the agency, he had a small cohort of project managers within its content partnerships teams. His remit was to create a delivery framework and ways of working for everyone across the department. "I quickly realised that, when I talked about the value of project management and the skills involved, people thought such content or processes were only aimed at 'project managers'. If it wasn't in their job title, I wasn't talking to them and it didn't apply."

Asked why there may be a distance between project management and the broader organisation, Jennings suggests the term may carry a certain amount of unhelpful baggage. "We've all been part

"That's what I've encouraged my teams to do and it's having an impact," he says. Indeed, Jennings believes the prevailing view of project management at Wavemaker has now changed. He ascribes this shift in part to the company running a Level 4 apprenticeship programme via APM and Multiverse, which has boosted the skills of his team members and shown the value that the company places on the discipline's key skills.

Those skills are then able to filter beyond that cohort throughout teams across the agency. And by aligning with the company's strategic vision, the project management team can show it's delivering on its promises and having a clear and positive impact.

He cites the example of a major talent development workstream. The project team is busy building competency and skill frameworks, learning pathways and clear role profiles for employees across the agency. It's a huge task, with over 400 people in the UK business, and a great deal of nuance within specific roles, departments and specialisms. "Our vision is to create work that moves people and has a positive impact in the world," says Jennings. "Whether it's working with media partners, with our clients and their creative agency or with our own internal teams, it's all led out of effective project management."

It seems more organisations are having this realisation. It makes sense that the influence of project management is spreading: project professionals are perfectly equipped to deliver projects and bring a sense of order, despite the ongoing threat of disruption.

As a result, more project professionals may find themselves charged with setting up new project functions. And they stand to learn a great deal – even as they encounter resistance based on ingrained habits and, potentially, past experience.

According to Jennings, anyone looking to get the message across in a new organisation shouldn't shy away from more drastic measures if they do encounter any pushback. "You'll hate me for this," he says, "but I'd even go so far as to stop referring to it as project management. If those two words cause eyes to roll, call it 'delivery'. Or even: 'getting stuff done'."

of projects that haven't worked," he says. "Applying the wrong tools and techniques for a particular scenario can lead to people thinking that project management just means Gantt charts and status updates, and the view that it can be a blocker to getting stuff done quickly."

Shifting perceptions

Inspired by thinkers such as Colin D Ellis, Susanne Madsen and Elizabeth Harrin, all of whom have stressed how projects fundamentally rely on their people, Jennings has taken a human-centric approach to the transformation. Process is important, he says, but project management is equally about building great project cultures and demonstrating leadership and emotional intelligence.

"Applying the wrong tools and techniques for a particular scenario can lead to people thinking that project management just means Gantt charts and status updates"

Carmel McConnell

Emma De Vita meets APM's Change Changes keynote speaker to find out what makes this change activist, lifelong project management lover and charity founder tick

Carmel McConnell MBE is best known for founding UK charity Magic Breakfast in 2004 (which she ran as CEO until 2020), but she also mentors CEOs and is author of *Change Activist: Make big things happen fast*. What you might not know is that she has spent most of her career as a project professional – at BT (working in the early 1990s on a new thing called 'the internet'), running huge change programmes at UBS and 20th Century Fox – then using her project management expertise to run Magic Breakfast, which now gives 220,000 school children a nutritious breakfast every day.

Her zigzag career has been full of unexpected opportunities that she has grabbed with relish but it has always been the enduring thread of project management that has tied it together. "Project management has been my saviour," she tells me via videocall from her north London home. McConnell, in contrast to her two elderly rescue dogs Hugo and Harvey who paw her for attention, is a bundle of energy. She cares deeply about things that matter and has used her passion (an overused word but definitely accurate here) and activism to pursue a career where she has followed her curiosity, no matter which way it wended.

McConnell grew up with her younger sister between Dagenham in east London and Fermanagh in Northern Ireland with Irish working-class parents. It was an upbringing that gave her a bigger perspective on life. "Dagenham was this centre of fascist behaviour and growing up in a community that was Irish, Jamaican and Indian, I got very involved in things like Rock Against Racism. From an early age you're thinking you can't go around beating people up just because their colour of skin was different to white," she explains. She left school at 15 to get a job and save up for university, winning a place at Sussex to study literature.

She quickly became chair of the radio station and went off to make a programme for BBC Radio Sussex "about some little campaign with some Welsh women and their husbands and a goat protesting against some American nuclear weapons stationed at an air force base just outside Newbury", she says. It was 1981 and she arrived at RAF Greenham Common to find seven determined albeit terrified women who persuaded her to sit down with them and their placards to block the A-road.

"I had never done anything like that in my life, but the women said, 'Do you see what you have done? Today, just by sitting here, we've stopped those lorries and we are a step away from those missiles being there.' There was something about that woman asking me 'Please can you do this?' that my heart couldn't resist," McConnell reflects. She gave up university and moved to the peace camp at Greenham, living outside in the mud for nearly two years, and getting arrested and imprisoned many times.

McConnell's career in activism was cut short after her father died young (her mother had also died young) and she needed to return home to look after her sister. She took a job as a secretary at BT but her daring appetite for change and action stuck. She ended up as a junior member of the technology team with a "fantastic boss" who spotted her talent for organising community projects and roped her into a project working on broadband

"Project managers are the great doers of capitalism and are the people who bring change"

protocols in 1993 that turned out to be the beginning of the internet. "I got very, very interested in data and very interested in project management," says McConnell. "It was such fun and I ended up loving it because, like activism, it was absolutely about the learning and how quickly we could absorb it into the next stage of development." She did a master's in broadband protocols and end-to-end data logistics in the mid-1990s.

"It was very exciting and I learned huge amounts about project management, particularly about the need to not go off-piste," she explains. She learnt early on about being firm with scope creep. "I made it a central part of everything that I did on the project management side that we will do what we say we're going to do. We're not going to add 10 things to the project. We're going to deliver the project to time, cost, quality. We're going to do it as we've promised to... I think that came

from the activism, which is where you have to secure the wins."

McConnell is a fan of project pre-mortems. "In BT, I was saying, 'It's too late when we are kicked out as total losers. Why don't we sit here and kick ourselves about to see what we're planning to get wrong?' It was the best thing because it allowed all the egos to come down a level," she says. "Anything that I do now, I try and do a pre-mortem," she says, explaining that it's necessary to keep her on track and fight "a great habit of personal laziness, procrastination and inability to focus".

Her proclivity for laziness seems hard to believe. To get motivated, McConnell needs to have a real sense of purpose. "It's really important to start with the heart. The biggest success I've had on projects has been where you've got people excited about it, where they feel, wow, that would be really good," she says. "Project managers are the great doers of capitalism and are the people who bring change – who've got the ability to get people excited about a bigger outcome, especially doing something for more than just profit.

"That's the big motivator because, yes, we can hit the profit and do the technical stuff, but can you do it in a way that gets people to really unleash their potential? That gives them a sense of the purpose of the organisation?" For project leaders, this means asking the "big why" by making the project something people really want to care about. "Project success is so much more likely to be achieved if you've built in passion and purpose as well as planning," she explains.

Times are changing. Having spent decades working in corporates, McConnell spots a big shift in the way that project managers are viewed by the C-suite. "CEOs recognise that if you want to get something done, you've got to have a strategic project management office. You've got to share the information. The boardroom has got to have a better connection to its project managers in order for the things that the organisation wants to actually happen. In a fast, transparent global market, the board has to talk to the project managers to get things done and it has to be in real time," she says.

She sees a big shift towards project management being seen as a strategic resource and something mission-critical to success in businesses in a way that it wasn't 20 years ago. "That's exciting because it needs to happen," she adds.

Magic Breakfast was another accidental career switch for McConnell, who explains that she had been happily running big change programmes at UBS while getting stuck into philanthropic work, when she was approached by Pearson to write a book on change activism. As part of her research, she wanted to find out if the City was building a fairer as well as a richer society for those living locally. She decided to ask a group of headteachers in east London for their

"People follow you when they see that you stand up for something and you're doing it with an open, honest, loving heart"

my partner Catherine and we ended up remortgaging the house to give me a year off work to bully the local authorities and make them understand that these kids get no breakfast at home." She soon founded Magic Breakfast, a charity that now reaches 1,000 schools across the UK. "So many kids now are living in food poverty with the cost-of-living crisis. If we can just make sure every child has a breakfast and a lunch and something to eat during the school holidays, then we as a society will have done something that's decent," she says.

Change Activist **is now in its third** edition. "I tried to write it to help people who have the desire to be leaders in their own lives at work or in any other setting. A change activist is someone who takes action in line with their values, even if it goes outside their comfort zone. For a leader, it is about taking the action that is agreed on and being the one who's brave enough to say, 'This is a good thing to do; this is why we're going to do it.'"

What does it mean to be a great leader? "You can take people with you because you show personal courage to take action and that you are willing to put yourself on the line. People follow you when they see that you stand up for something and you're doing it with an open, honest, loving heart. The big project now is how we make the transition from this kind of capitalism to the kind of capitalism that is genuinely going to solve the climate crisis and the social and racial issues that are in front of us," she says. "Project management is the fantastic key to unlock those kinds of big changes, which is why I'm probably quite glad that I've learned the skills and I will be proud to be a project manager till the day I die." Well, you couldn't get a better advocate for the project profession than that, could you?

views. "They said they had to bring in food every single day to be able to teach because so many kids were coming in hungry. The most important lessons were taught in the morning and the kids weren't able to concentrate," she says.

"It was a horrible moment," she remembers. "I had no idea that two bus

"We can hit the profit and do the technical stuff, but can we do it in a way that gets people to unleash their potential?"

rides from my office, there were kids going to school hungry." She started buying bagels and cereal and dropping them into a couple of local schools on Saturdays. Within a week, she had 25 schools asking her to do the same for them. "Being geeky, I said, 'I'm a technology project manager. Can we do some measuring of the benefits?' Within two weeks, they said kids who were out looking for food in the morning were there at school. They were on time. They can give them a toasted bagel, a glass of milk, and they are settled and ready to learn. I just thought, God Almighty, for the cost of a breakfast, these kids are getting a morning of study."

McConnell needed to do something about it. "I went home, had a chat with

Project managing the National Trust

ANDREW SAUNDERS DELVES BEHIND THE SCENES OF EUROPE'S LARGEST CONSERVATION CHARITY TO EXPLORE HOW THE PROJECT PROFESSION HAS TAKEN ROOT, FROM APPRENTICE UP TO SENIOR MANAGEMENT

Summer will soon be upon us, and the thoughts of great swathes of the population turn lightly, not to love as Tennyson once maintained, but rather to something much more dependable – the National Trust. This estimable institution dates back to 1895 and is often gently parodied by the intelligentsia as a sort of public service for day trippers, a handy provider of tea rooms and gift shops with grand country houses and fine gardens next door.

But the National Trust is Europe's largest conservation charity, a sophisticated and modernising organisation that boasts engagement numbers that others can only dream of: 5.7 million paid-up members, around 10,000 employees and an army of some 44,000 volunteers. Its 500 historic properties and 780 miles of coastline paid host to 20 million visitors in 2022, with the three most popular attractions (Attingham Park in Shropshire, Cliveden in Buckinghamshire and Dunham Massey in Greater Manchester) attracting over 500,000 people apiece.

That makes a trip to a National Trust property one of the most popular things to do in the UK. By comparison, a mere 15 million or so fans attended a Premier League football game in the 2021/22 season.

Modernising the Trust

It also accounts for the fact that many members of the public – whether they belong to the National Trust or not – feel strongly about its activities. The National Trust is no stranger to controversy,

whether on a small scale (there was a minor outcry when it changed the flapjack recipe in its cafés a few years ago) or a more substantial one. Last year, a controversial group called Restore Trust tried – and completely failed – to have seven candidates elected to the National Trust's council. The group claimed that the Trust was becoming too 'woke' in its approach to issues such as transgender and gay rights and historic links to the slave trade.

All the more crucial then that the National Trust should continue to deliver the experiences and insights that its members and visitors enjoy so much while continuing on its modernising

> **"I joined as a project manager in 2020, and within two and a half years I was a senior programme manager"**

march. And while it may not be the first skillset that leaps to mind when one thinks of the National Trust's work, project management has become fundamental to its 21st-century agenda of preserving heritage buildings and natural landscapes so that they can be enjoyed now and in the future.

"At its heart, project management is the key way that we deliver benefits for the organisation. Every four years or so, we deliver around £1bn of projects using charitable funds," says Mike Hudson, its Head of Strategic Planning and Project

and Programme Management. "The impact we [project professionals] have on the delivery of strategy is tremendous."

A record year for projects

Last year was a record year, he adds, in which projects totalling some £280m were successfully delivered. These included the completion of a four-year, £7.4m restoration at Seaton Delaval, a Georgian country house in Northumberland designed by renowned architect John Vanbrugh. Alongside structural work such as reroofing and

Helen Moir

the restoration of six ornate chimney stacks, a novel scheme called Rising Stars enlisted the help of students to design exhibits that showcase the National Trust's restoration project work. Five schools and 1,000 families have also been involved in a programme called the Delaval Dialogues to engage local people as well as visitors in the success of the project.

The charity is also committed to achieving net zero by 2030 and since 2013 has invested some £35m in renewable energy schemes such as biomass boilers, solar power and hydro-electric turbines, and now generates 50% of its own energy. Thirty-six EV charging points have been installed at sites around the country and there are more to come. "We've done some pretty innovative stuff. We installed the UK's first marine-source heat pump," Hudson says. This uses heat extracted from seawater to heat Plas Newydd, a large country house on the Menai Straits in Anglesey, saving £70,000 a year in fuel bills as well as cutting carbon emissions.

From apprentice to programme director

There are around 300 'official' project professionals at the National Trust, ranging from apprentices (about 12 a year are taken on) to programme directors, with coordinators and project managers in between. The Trust's commitment to such an extensive and varied portfolio enables it to attract skilled project professionals because the range of opportunities is so great and there are clear paths for professional development.

"I joined as a project manager in 2020, and within two and a half years I was a senior programme manager," says Helen Moir, who works on the innovations and partnership team in the North East. "The variety of what we do

is just bonkers – architecture, curatorial, food and beverage, holidays, building control, farming – you would never create a business that does all the things we do." There's even a project manager for dogs, whose role it is to balance the needs of visitors with dogs and those who may want a dog-free experience.

Most of its project professionals work as part of multidisciplinary teams organised into six regions and specialist directorates, such as land and nature, curation and marketing, for example. "It's a matrix organisation," says Hudson. "One of the huge benefits of being organised this way is that the people running the projects are located close to the projects and to their beneficiaries. Our internal clients get a great service from the profession as a result."

The charity encourages its project professionals to climb the ladder of APM qualifications, right up to chartered status. "The big driver [of chartered] for us has been professionalisation," says Hudson. "It helps internally on our journey to establish project management as critical to the organisation, and it helps externally in terms of recruitment and attracting talent."

The benefits of upskilling

It's all part of a mission to boost the delivery of public benefits by upskilling project professionals and raising their status in the organisation, he adds. "We've been on a bit of journey over the last decade or so. When we started, people tended to say that anyone could manage a project. But now they appreciate the value of professional project managers."

Hudson heads a centre of excellence for the profession to provide a hub for what might otherwise be a rather disparate group of people to support shared learning and build what he

"People tended to say anyone could manage a project. But now they appreciate the value of professional project managers"

describes as a "community of practice". Their latest initiative goes beyond the project management community, however, and aims to inculcate a better understanding of the role of senior sponsors in successful projects. "We are also focusing on our sponsors and professionalising that role. Because when you look at the studies that people like APM do, they consistently say that the number one determinant of project success is having a great sponsor."

Last year saw the pilot of the new programme aimed at project and programme sponsors from middle-management level right up to the senior leadership team. Its aim was partly to showcase the value of specific project management skills to the executive, but also to look at behavioural aspects. "There is a lot of focus on the role you are expected to play as a sponsor and

how to set things up for success." Around 30 sponsors have now graduated, and it is set to become a fixture of the National Trust's development programme.

"It's been fantastic, we've had some really enthusiastic responses," he says.

Expanding via partnerships

The National Trust is also branching out into projects where it works in partnership with other groups on schemes that go well beyond the stately home and landscaped garden archetype. Because one big challenge for any organisation that is tasked with preserving the past is how to do so while also moving with the times.

Take its Riverlands programme as one example. In collaboration with European partners, the National Trust has worked to revert the course of Somerset's River Aller – straightened

Mike Hudson

Tom Grosvenor

Clockwise from left: Attingham Park, Shropshire; Seaton Delaval Hall, Northumberland; Castlefield Viaduct, Manchester; aerial shots of the Roundhouse, Birmingham

over the centuries by human intervention – to its more meandering natural form. This not only improves drought resilience by storing more water in the water table, it also creates much needed new habitats for plants and animals – including beavers on the Holnicote Estate and the planting of 25,000 native trees.

Then there's its involvement with Castlefield Viaduct in Manchester. The National Trust is working with

"We also do projects like Castlefield, because we want to do something for all those people who can't get to country houses"

local authorities on a plan to convert the 330m-long steel viaduct, closed to rail traffic in 1969, into an elevated urban park along the lines of New York's famous Highline. The first stage of this ambitious plan – a £1.8m temporary park covering half the viaduct – is already complete.

What are the key differences when working in partnership? "We don't necessarily own the properties I am working on," says Tom Grosvenor, Senior Project Manager and urban delivery lead for the Midlands and East England region, whose projects include the restoration of the Roundhouse in Birmingham, a joint venture with the Canal & River Trust. "You have to appreciate that you don't have as much control over things. As a project manager I want to say I'm a bit of a control freak. You have to learn about relationship building, patience and how to pick your battles."

Tempting the urbanites

It's well worth it, he adds, because urban partnerships like these keep the National Trust relevant and bring its benefits to a new and potentially younger audience who might otherwise remain unaware of its activities.

"Over 90% of the population live in cities but only 2% of the National Trust's estate is in urban areas. There's a question of relevance – you might never have heard of the National Trust, but if we are doing a project on your doorstep, then maybe you will explore some of the rest of our estate too."

So while there is definitely change in the air at the National Trust, it's all in the name of choice and providing more benefit to more people so they access heritage, green space and, yes, maybe a gift shop and a cup of tea as well – wherever they are. "We still spend around 50% of our funds on what we class as looking after – the more traditional projects like Seaton Delaval," says Hudson. "But now we also do projects like Castlefield, because we want to do something for all those people who can't get to country houses, too."

WHY PROJECT PROFESSIONALS BELONG IN THE C-SUITE

IF YOU HAVE AMBITIONS TO BECOME A CHIEF PROJECT OFFICER ONE DAY, THEN IT'S TIME TO THINK STRATEGY, STRATEGY, STRATEGY, URGES EWELINA KRUK, TRANSFORMATION DIRECTOR AT THE INSTANT GROUP

The link between projects and business strategy (and the value that the former have to the latter), and the idea that project professionals can follow a route to the top of the business by becoming a chief project officer, is becoming ever more evident.

This is no easy task for a project professional, as there's no natural path in this direction other than demonstrating the value-add you bring to the table when it comes to strategy implementation. But not only is there no path, there's also very little established advice on how to reach the very top of an organisation in a project capacity. This is a trend that the profession is willing to engage in, but we need some more concrete advice on how to get there.

Project professionals and the C-suite

Does every project professional want to enter the C-suite? Unlikely. It may not be a space for everybody (and some of you may have an adverse reaction to the thought of it), but for the time being, let us assume that we both want the same thing – to help build a common route by which project professionals can go all the way to the top of any organisation, perhaps becoming a chief project officer. So how do you do it? This a tricky question to answer, as those who make it there often forge their own unique path. This leads me to focus on the benefits and value-add project professionals can introduce to an organisation as an integral part of the C-suite.

The concept

It is thought that project professionals already (or will as a matter of course) belong in the C-suite because of the balance shifting between running the business and changing the business. In other words, organisations become projectified based on the volume of change they handle and how they construct their propositions, so impacting on the demand for the necessary skills to deliver these
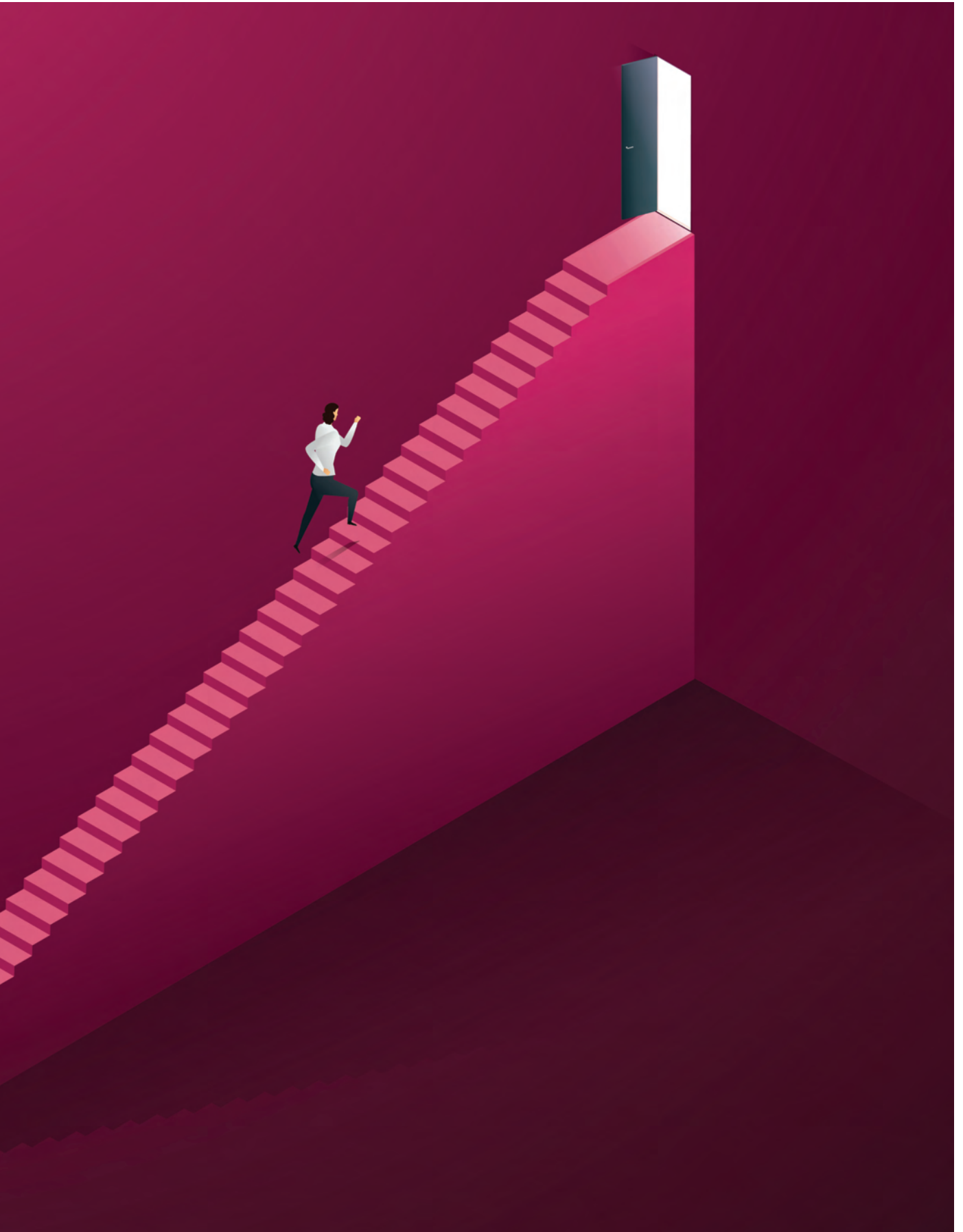
projects throughout an organisation. This results in the need for a chief project officer role on the executive leadership team. I would agree that this is a positive factor but it should be an irrelevant one given we are only at the start of that journey. It is the versatility of our core skills that ought to be the main driving force behind the demand, and not the prospective volume of change. I am not arguing for the past but rather for the future.

People skills, especially leadership skills, are only one of the many feathers we, as project professionals, have in our caps. The spectrum of our skills is so great that it would be a huge waste for organisations not to seize our full potential, regardless of where they are on the maturity curve of projectification. The work we do points to change and improvement that can be applied in any context and within any part of any business. Project professionals can collaborate with and complement any other part of a business and make it better. That collaboration should be present and driven from the top down. Furthermore, as highly skilled facilitators and action seekers, we can enable the C-suite to become a highly effective team. So why isn't it commonplace for project professionals to be in the C-suite? In my view, it's the way project professionals think about the world outside projects and how we connect to the strategy.

Strategy: a phenomenon or a phantom?

Increased competition and technological advances compel businesses to focus on their competitive advantage. Strategy serves as the bridge between the current organisational state and its future. Since the inception of strategy, it has become the focus for businesses aiming to reach the top of their performance, resulting in a high volume of knowledge and advice shared by academics and consultants. However, the low success rate suggests a mismatch between theory and performance.

The issue lies within the top-down skillset gap in the organisation. Some businesses that fail may still be equipped with a level of project management capability, but if the

link to and across the C-suite is not present, the ability to help the business stand up and take ownership of the strategy could prove unattainable. It's an obvious void that can be filled by project professionals capable of looking beyond the confinement of projects and towards strategy.

Strategic project management

Strategic project management uses all the tools of traditional project management in a way that aligns with an organisation's overall strategic goals and objectives. It is the application of principles and practices crafted in a specific way that considers the long-term goals and direction of the organisation. In its focus, it goes beyond the borders of the Barnes Triangle of time, cost and quality. Instead, its horizon extends by looking at the project's impact on the organisation's

It would be a waste for organisations not to seize our full potential, regardless of where they are on the maturity curve of projectification

strategic objectives, its stakeholders and its future growth.

It is built on a deep understanding of the organisation's vision, mission, goals, purpose and behaviours, as well as external factors that may impact its future. Through the application of strategic project management, organisations can ensure that all their initiatives are aligned with the overall strategy, generating the desired outcomes and benefits. It also helps to identify potential risks and opportunities and to adapt to changing circumstances, ensuring that they remain competitive and agile in a rapidly changing business environment.

Strategy alignment and a focus on organisational benefits are tasks for projects as much as for programmes and portfolios, yet the link is often lost and projects are delivered in silos.

Linking projects and strategy

Strategy is meant to result in the implementation of what has been crafted. Therefore, it can be assumed that a strategy equates to a high volume of tasks an organisation needs to undertake to change itself. In APM's view, project management applies "processes, methods, skills, knowledge and experience to achieve specific project objectives", which are underpinned by tasks. Strategy and projects are intrinsically linked. A mixture of project management with strategic management can move mountains when turning business strategy into implementation. Some consider strategic projects crucial to the implementation. Aren't all projects strategic?

Project management is an enabler of strategy. If manifested as strategic project management, it can drive an organisation's change more efficiently and with greater focus. However, project management on its own is not a panacea. It relies upon skilled project professionals to deliver change, carrying the weight of the task mostly on their own shoulders. Project Management Institute's 2021 *Pulse of the Profession* report reveals that 35% of projects fail, resulting in an investment loss. While the trend is on the up, there is significant room for improvement for both businesses and project professionals.

Dynamism is improvement

Recently tasked with reading *Turn The Ship Around* by David Marquet, I had an epiphany. Businesses need to move very fast in the current environment but projects don't always do so (old news, I know). Project management, whichever tools or methodologies it uses, including strategic project management, needs an injection of dynamism and all the brain power available within the organisation. The control the system seeks needs to be abandoned and, instead, the tools we possess need to be used to embrace continuous improvement. It is time to let go of control.

It is becoming increasingly clear to me that project management in any form cannot be there to deliver the answers or outputs. It is there to support the business in designing its solutions from the ground up, being driven by
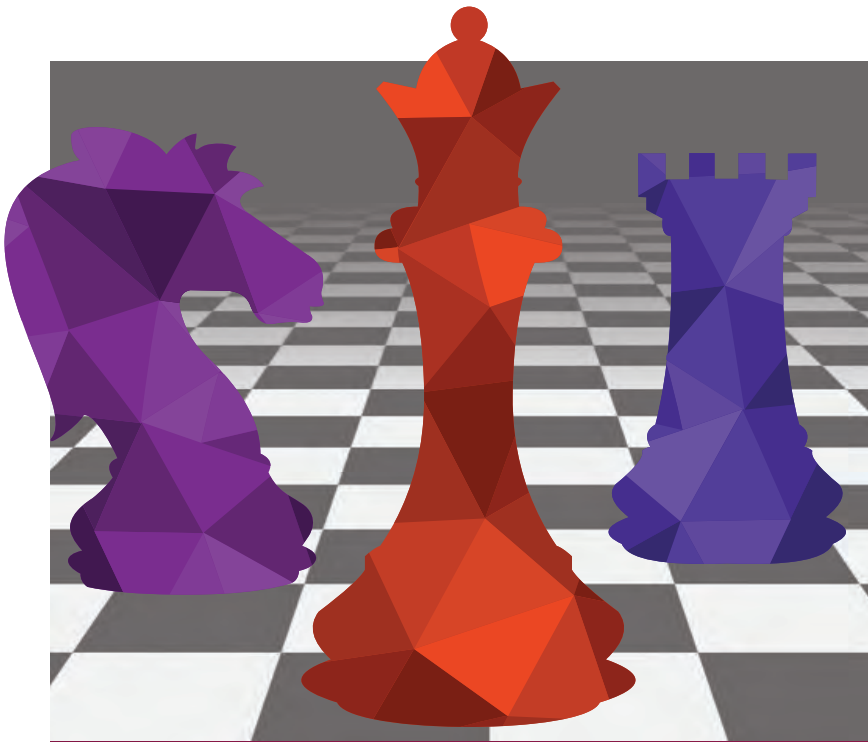
Project management is an everyday ritual and a mindset that we need to help build, not an offline or side-of-the-desk task

TIPS FOR WANNABE CHIEF PROJECT OFFICERS

1 Understand what strategy means in your organisation. Focus on the blueprint and make sure to ask questions if anything is unclear.

2 Understand problems fast and propose solutions even faster. Data and insights are invaluable when proposing solutions, but progress will always win over perfection.

3 Minimise the need for control and focus on ownership. Build solutions to problems from within the business organically. Implement self-service for initiatives logging and progress updates.

4 Work towards continuous improvement. This will involve failure; if so, fail fast and grow from it.

5 Believe in yourself and your intuition. Make the question 'what's the value added?' an acid test for any key decisions you make against an organisational hierarchy of purpose.

6 Focus communications on what's next and why, not how.

purpose. It is an everyday ritual and a mindset that we need to help build, not an offline or side-of-the-desk task. It is an ability to adapt and change within the organisation, which is a key competitive advantage to deliver better outcomes. This means project professionals relinquish control to the people and instead focus on the roadmap of strategic priorities and strategic objectives. It is no longer about project professionals steering the ship, it is about the capability to invite others to do so.

A personal exploration of strategy

My background is in construction and not business management. In construction, I hugely enjoyed working with technical teams, solving design issues and seeing how the fruits of my work materialised in a physical form – but I often felt frustrated. Not being privy to key strategic decisions that adversely affected my projects felt like I was always on the back foot.

It was difficult to keep up with the influx of changes coming from within the business without having a clear brief. It seemed like two worlds were colliding, and I thought I knew who (or rather what) the culprit was – the poorly defined strategy, resulting in the business simply not having a concept of what objectives it was trying to achieve. That led me to prove my point: that

projects can only be as good as the strategy is. I focused on strategy as a topic of my dissertation.

There are a few things I learnt. There is no one definition of strategy or what level of detail it should entail, which may present a confusing landscape for project professionals. Study participants and active project professionals agreed that the relationship between strategy making and execution is critical. In their view, the golden thread is that of action. Strategy formulation plans the actions while strategy execution takes those actions. There is a clear need for synthesis between those two, otherwise seen as separate streams. Furthermore, practising professionals' perceptions highlighted the underlying fear of recommending adjustments to the strategy even if it no longer delivers the required benefits. The fear can be alleviated through a dynamic approach to strategy.

As a transformation director, I am learning that strategy picks the river to go up and where it leads. However, it doesn't state what vessel or paddles to use. It also will not guarantee good weather throughout. There is the expectation for the strategy to be specific, to allow the construct of programmes of work, management, measurement and governance, but this is rarely the case.

This is why project professionals need to be involved, but that involvement comes with an adjustment. There is a need to think of that journey through a strategic, benefits, purpose and profit-led lens. We also need to become champions of dynamic capabilities and not central control, utilising the latest tools and AI to put the ownership in the hands of all members of the organisation. It is this value-add that will make us indispensable. It elevates us to that deserved seat as a chief project officer.
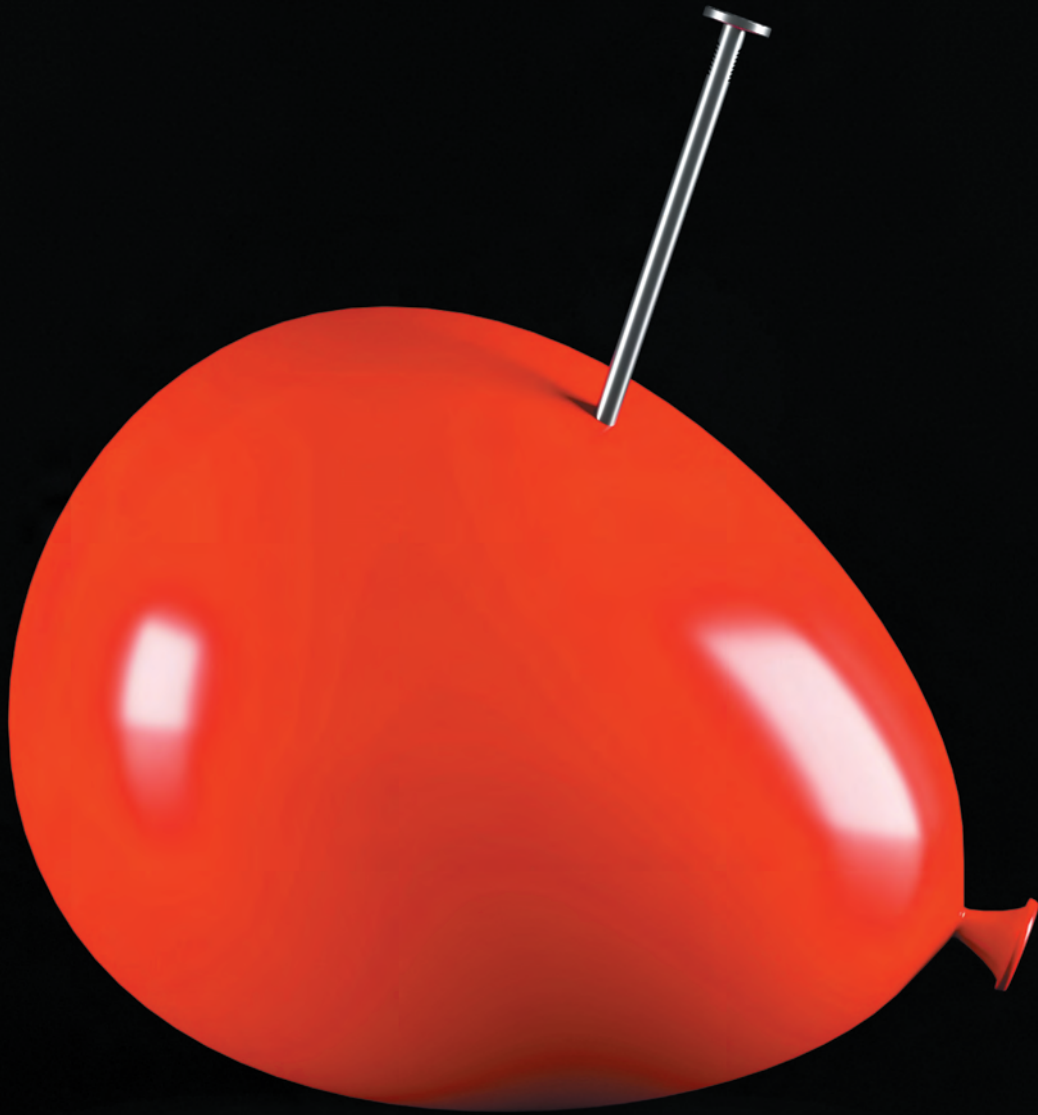
THE CRITICAL ROLE OF PROJECTS IN BUSINESS RESILIENCE

A PROGRAMME TO ENSURE THE CONTINUED SUPPLY OF LIQUEFIED NATURAL GAS TO GERMANY DESPITE RUSSIA'S INVASION OF UKRAINE PUTS INTO PRACTICE THE ROLE OF PROJECTS IN DELIVERING BUSINESS RESILIENCE, WRITE SERHIY KOVELA, DAVID ROBERTS AND SHEILA ROBERTS

T oday's world is increasingly volatile, uncertain, complex and ambiguous (VUCA), with rapid changes impacting the global supply chain, resources, technology, climate and geopolitics. The consequences are that without great projects, organisations cannot adapt to VUCA environments at pace and become sustainable. This is why project managers are at the heart of the rapidly emerging organisational practice of business resilience. Projects are recognised as vehicles to deliver change, reduce risks and improve overall performance. However, some projects can deliver changes that do not add to progress or resilience.

In the 21st century, without business resilience, organisations are not sustainable. Project managers are already fully stretched with their current activities to create the deliverables authorised by projects. So, in addition to ever shortening timescales, tighter budgets and evolving quality standards, how can a project manager adapt their practices to deliver business resilience in addition to achieving project success? We suggest the answer is to adopt and adapt the Business Resilience Framework.

The Business Resilience Framework

Our book *Business Resilience* defines the term as "sustained progress delivered at pace". The pace is the right pace for the organisation and initiative, and the progress is defined for the situation at the time. For example, a deep recession may mean the definition of progress is that the status quo is maintained.

The Business Resilience Framework (BRF) enables measurable performance improvement focused on sustainable progress. Briefly, the BRF has 22 elements allocated to the five 'domains' of Principles, Roles, Resilience Foundations, PACE[1] Culture and Progress Cycle (see diagram above). The framework is complementary and uses existing
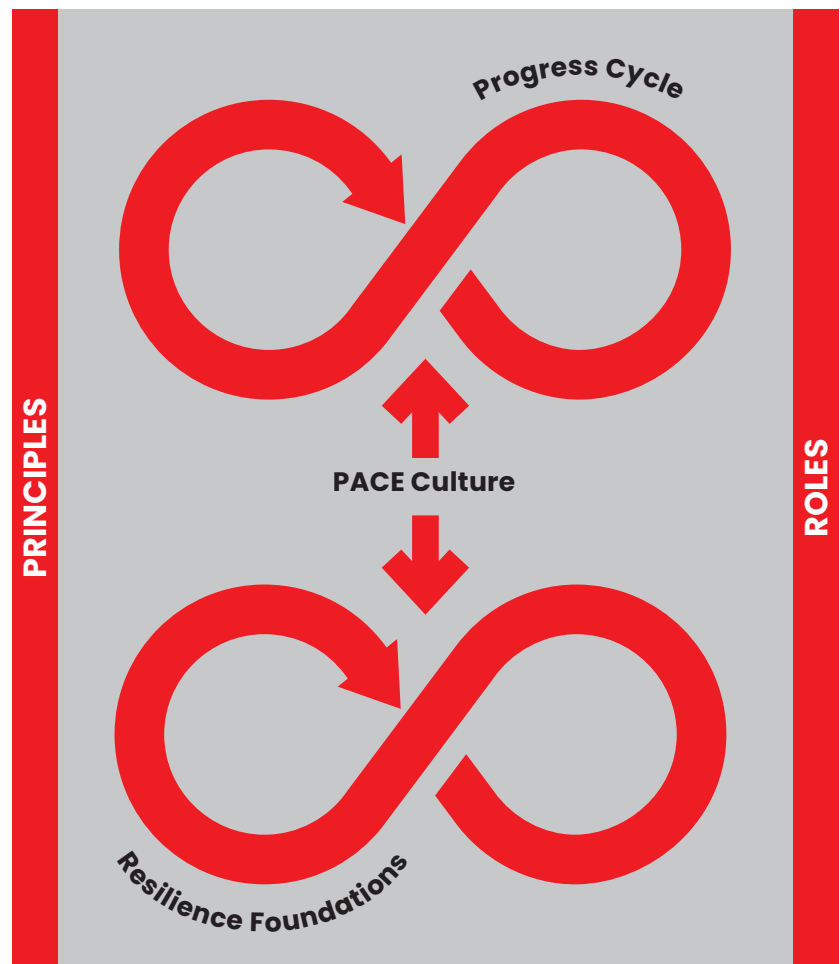
good practice including the project management methods and approaches already in place for the organisation, which are strengthened by adding the resilience focus. Project managers will work mainly in the Progress Cycle but need to understand the Resilience Foundations and build a PACE Culture.

Putting it into practice in Germany

The Accelerated Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG) Programme in Germany demonstrates many of the BRF elements while having achieved a truly amazing performance – illustrating the interconnected nature of projects and business resilience. The Accelerated LNG Programme addressed the problem that Germany had no sea terminals to accept LNG when Russia invaded Ukraine. It would face gas shortages in

both industry and households without new LNG capacity. Originally estimated at three years to complete, the first terminal became operational 200 days after work started on site in May 2022. The programme is modular, delivering six terminals in total. It is also sustainable because these will be converted to produce hydrogen fuel later, in line with net-zero targets.

Resilience Foundations

This domain ensures a strong organisational foundation to provide resilience in the face of VUCA events. In the words of management thinker Stephen R Covey, "Begin with the end in mind." To achieve this, some simple steps can be taken to immediately incorporate business resilience into your project management. The focus here is to:

1. **P**urposeful mindset, **A**pplication of tools, **C**apability and skills, **E**levated energy.

Project management provides excellent opportunities for embedding a 'purposeful mindset'

1 Manage innovation and risks. In the Accelerated LNG Programme, accelerated timescales were achieved by innovations. Business resilience assesses these against the risks and strategies developed to mitigate them. This included assessing the potential impact of changes in energy markets and requirements, as well as developing plans to address the impacts.

2 Increase efficiency. Business resilience focus was on making the most of the resources demonstrated in the Accelerated LNG Programme by using a modular design for the transportation and processing facilities, and utilising their network partners, so ensuring that resources were only used on the right elements to achieve progress.

3 Establish strong governance and decision-making processes. This needed clear roles and responsibilities in the Accelerated LNG Programme and establishing processes for making rapid decisions and assessing progress aligned to regulatory requirements.

4 Build network relationships and collaborate with stakeholders. Engaging with all stakeholders across the partner network, understanding their needs and expectations and building relationships with them helped improve performance and deliver success.

The critical aspects of Resilience Foundations in the Accelerated LNG Programme were: the leadership in the speed and decisiveness of the German government accelerating new legislation, making investment available in a record time and supporting the relevant innovation and risk.

Progress Cycle

The Progress Cycle domain ensures focus on both progress and business resilience. Initially, it is important to agree the definition of progress for a cycle of work, and then to:

1 Identify the right projects. In the Accelerated LNG Programme, a business resilience focus identified projects that: (a) represented optimum value to meet the current need; (b) could be realistically delivered by using floating terminals; and (c) aligned with the sustainability agenda by providing the ability to switch to hydrogen processing in the future in line with national net-zero policy.

2 Ensure that projects are well resourced and funded. This meant having the financial, human and physical resources to complete successfully. The German government funded a revised budget of more than €6bn and engaged partner organisations to make certain the right resources were available.

3 Enable the teams to deliver. In addition to appropriate competences of the team, this meant delegating authority for decision-making within a framework of governance to ensure escalation where this was required.

4 Monitor progress. The Accelerated LNG Programme's progress was closely monitored so that corrective actions could be taken, such as starting work on site before final permits were issued. This helped ensure the programme completed ahead of time within a revised budget and according to expectations.

When prioritising projects or requirements, it's useful to add an indication of the contribution to progress and resilience. Business resilience should be built into the business case by considering how the proposed project will aid the organisation to achieve progress towards its vision and also build resilience. Reviewing the business case and requirements at each stage review

When prioritising projects or requirements, it's useful to add an indication of the contribution to progress and resilience

will mean that this focus on progress and resilience is always maintained.

Progress and business resilience are further enabled by adding an understanding of the level of challenge from external and internal environments alongside the opportunity for the organisation, customers, users and partners. This balance means that the needs of the organisation, its users and partners are always considered. Scoring the level of challenge and the opportunity is done as part of the project assessment.

PACE Culture

Management guru Peter Drucker's quote that "Culture eats strategy for breakfast" is addressed by a strong culture of purpose and empowerment, enabling greater development of the organisation's resilience. Project management provides excellent opportunities for embedding a 'purposeful mindset', so that everyone is clear not only on their role but also about their part in delivering the vision, and applying the right tools with appropriate capabilities and skills. This results in elevated energy within the project team and developing a PACE Culture to be able to deliver more than expected, thereby making the team and organisation more resilient. This was vital in the Accelerated LNG Programme in terms of:

1 Improved communication. Key stakeholders were engaged at the right levels. The new LNG Acceleration Act was passed in the German parliament within days. Everyone involved was aligned and contributing to project's progress in a timely manner with good communication.

2 Purposeful mindset. The team and partners showed belief, trust and collaboration to achieve what would not otherwise have been possible. They understood their purpose was to ensure a continued energy supply, not simply deliver a project.

3 Improved capabilities. New skills to build and manage the LNG terminals were developed, leaving longer-term capabilities.

4 Elevated energy. This was needed to achieve this delivery in record time. This involved empowering, motivating and then trusting the team to deliver.

BUSINESS RESILIENCE GUIDANCE

Key idea	Tip
BRF elements are complementary to existing project practices and processes.	Review the level of business resilience using the Resilience Profile tool to identify priority areas.
The BRF can be introduced at any organisational level, depending on the situation.	The level of resilience, urgency, capacity and existing practices will all influence the most appropriate implementation strategy.
The BRF should be adapted to meet the project, programme or organisational situation.	Existing tools and templates can be adapted to incorporate business resilience without adding significantly to workloads.
Resilience Foundations	Delivers the business effectively, efficiently and economically.
Progress Cycle	Delivers the initiatives (via projects) for progress and resilience.
PACE Culture	Ensures the team has the motivation, energy and ability to deliver.

BRF review of the Accelerated LNG Programme

Business resilience has been shown to apply to the Accelerated LNG Programme insofar as it met and exceeded the projected outcomes even in the face of continued unexpected challenges. Performance improvement was achieved by ensuring the programme was designed and executed so it could adjust in response to internal and external challenges, including adhering to net-zero targets, managing lobbying groups and meeting the needs of industry and households. All this while, at the same time, identifying initiatives representing optimum value, ensuring staff were trained and equipped to deliver rapidly and other resources were available, plus mitigating disruptions and taking advantage of them. With twin goals of sustained progress and improved business resilience, Germany ensured its gas supply was maintained not only last winter but also in future years.

PURE strategies to establish business resilience

Project managers can take inspiration from the Accelerated LNG Programme to implement business resilience practice to improve organisational performance. PURE[2] strategies are available for the BRF to guide implementation. Given the situation, the Accelerated LNG Programme

2. **P**rogressive, **U**rgent, **R**eactive and **E**xploratory.

A progressive strategy to implement modularly over a period of time or a reactive strategy to implement only priority elements may be more appropriate in your organisation

clearly required an urgent strategy. A progressive strategy to implement modularly over a period of time or a reactive strategy to implement only priority elements may be more appropriate in your organisation. As a project manager, you may find it best simply to adopt those elements that are relevant to your team. How can project managers best contribute to business resilience in today's volatile market conditions to improve sustainability?

1 Recognise that projects delivered at the right pace yield better value and benefits realisation.

2 The value of progress and business resilience for the project should be identified before and after implementation, thus building stakeholder confidence.

3 Undertake a Resilience Profile to identify the current level of business

resilience and identify the priority areas that will be strengthened by the project.

4 Focus the delivery of projects to contribute to an evolving organisational vision.

5 Build a PACE Culture in the project team with clarity of purpose, the right competences, appropriate tools utilised and seeing elevated energy and motivation as a result.

The role of projects to deliver business resilience is central and is delivered through the Progress Cycle of the BRF. Projects deliver the right changes to strengthen resilience. By ensuring project management embraces business resilience practices, businesses can ensure that they are well positioned to face the continuing challenges of the 21st century and achieve sustained progress delivered at pace.

Dr Serhiy Kovela is Associate Professor in Project Management at Northeastern University London. David Roberts is CEO and Sheila Roberts is COO of CUPE International and Resilience Professionals. The Business Resilience Framework is explained in more detail in *Business Resilience: A practical guide to sustained progress delivered at pace* (Kogan Page). More information about the Business Resilience Framework, including templates and self-assessment, can be found at www.resilienceprofessionals.com

Salary and Market Trends Survey 2023

Our groundbreaking research, undertaken by YouGov, provides a comprehensive overview of salaries and working life in the project profession, as well as the latest trends and key issues that'll have the biggest impact on project management. The average salary of a project professional in 2023 is £47,500, with APM members earning 42% above the average.

Download the report and see how you compare:
apm.org.uk/project-management-salary-survey

HOW TO
BE SUCCESSFUL IN A PROJECT MANAGEMENT JOB INTERVIEW

VETERAN OF INTERVIEW PANELS (AND HEAVY METAL FAN) JASPAL KAUR-GRIFFIN, HEAD OF PROGRAMMES AT THE BAR STANDARDS BOARD, GIVES HER ADVICE TO THOSE ON THE OTHER SIDE OF THE TABLE

Throughout my career I have chaired and sat on a vast number of interview panels, both for project management roles and for other senior roles, such as head of risk and head of equality, diversity and inclusion. While there are some common points of advice that apply to all job interviews, there are some that are unique to project management ones. Here I share my in-depth knowledge to help increase the chances of project professionals who are hoping to secure their dream position. Why not try my top tips for increasing your success at project management interviews?

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1 Research the organisation you are applying to

If there is one super-skill that most project professionals have, it's our ability to plan and organise, but I have seen a troubling lack of this in many interviews. For example, many project professionals I have interviewed completely confuse the legal regulator I work with for the representative organisation instead and so address us by the wrong name. I can usually see the panel flinch when this happens and it gets our backs up from the very start as it demonstrates a lack of preparation and attention to detail, which are key skills project professionals need to have. My first top tip is to be fully prepared by knowing with whom you are meeting and what the nature of the job really entails so you don't alienate the panel by getting key facts wrong.

2 Read the job scope in detail

Candidates usually tell me about how passionate they are about delivering IT projects at interview and this does makes me chuckle, as ours are anything but! Successful candidates, I find, can clearly demonstrate why they want this role and the skills they will bring to the organisation. They have also taken the time to think about all of this beforehand, so they are able to pass this information on in a coherent and succinct manner. Interview prep is important. If we are but one of many organisations you are interviewing with and you do not clearly tell us why you really want this role and why you are the right candidate, then there is a likelihood we will feel this lack of enthusiasm – something best avoided for interview success.

3 Research your panel

This is imperative as it will ensure you pitch your answers at the right level. By showing an interest in their background, this will also enable you to think of questions relevant to them and

Part of embracing diversity is being proud of who you are and your individual story and being brave enough to share this

to establish a connection. This is also a good way to ensure you become less forgettable among the many candidates they may be interviewing. For example, is everyone on your panel a project professional or is there an HR manager as well? Overusing technical terminology might result in the non-project professionals feeling alienated and you being less able to establish a connection with them. Project management lingo is perfectly acceptable if your panel is encompassed of like-minded individuals, but even then it can mean much less than providing salient examples of where your experience lies in delivering these specific processes.

4 Test all IT and research back-up travel routes

If you are dialling into an interview, try and ensure that all your systems are set up and ready to go 15 minutes beforehand. Test the interview link beforehand by doing a test call with the HR administrator who sent you the link. If you are interviewing in person, work out your route beforehand along with a back-up route. I remember being particularly impressed with a candidate who was 15 minutes early on the day we had train strikes as she told me she had two different back-up plans – what could be a more wonderful demonstration of you really wanting that job? In the event that things do still go wrong, then appear calm and collected as you apologise to the panel for the delay. Appearing flustered shows an inability to be calm when things go wrong, and a project professional who is calm, centred and can respond when things go off-track sends the message that they can remain unfazed when

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there is digression from a project (and let's face it, there is always a digression from the project plan!)

5 Be holistic in your answers

When answering questions, try and provide a broad perspective. This means factoring in elements to do with equality and diversity, stakeholder engagement and risk in your answers, where appropriate. This demonstrates an ability to see the big picture among the often varying perspectives provided by subject-matter experts. It might also endear you to the panel as they will see you as being multi-faceted, not one-dimensional.

6 Be authentic

Don't be afraid to let your personality shine through – it's quite okay to show that you are an individual with personal tastes and preferences. I, for example, am an avid listener of heavy metal music and nothing has ever

given me greater joy than seeing Iron Maiden and Scorpions live in concert – I make no apologies for that whatsoever. I also do like to be professionally dressed for interviews in suits if that is what the occasion calls for, but do tend to have eye make-up on that is somewhat sparkly. Part of embracing diversity is being proud of who you are and your individual story and being brave enough to share this – whether it is about your personal taste in music or the lessons you have learned throughout your career as a project professional. It is a good way to let the panel see who you really are. Their responses when such details are shared will also give you an indication of the culture and values they hold in the organisation, and will help you assess whether you truly wish to work for that organisation.

7 Limit the questions you ask at the end and don't be too pushy

Be selective with the questions you ask at the end, but please, do ask questions! Make them meaningful ones though. Nothing is more exhausting than when candidates think that asking seven questions is in any way acceptable. I would suggest keeping your questions really pertinent, and try to limit yourself to your two most burning ones. A candidate who asked what the results of our last staff survey showed, and what we have done to address any concerns raised, certainly stood above the one who asked when they will hear the outcome of the interview (any decent interview panel will touch on next steps as they conclude the interview). Also, be wary of being too pushy in your questions. A candidate once asked how we would commit to their professional development and wanted a detailed plan right there and then. Woah! I very much applaud candidates when they mention being committed to their CPD but a better approach would be to

Panels sometimes see seven candidates in a day and having an endless stream of questions will likely just make us lose interest

ask if the organisation has any schemes to assist you, instead of demanding a full-blown plan. Panels sometimes see seven candidates in a day and having an endless stream of questions will likely just make us lose interest. Keep it win-win by asking your most insightful questions – engage us so we will engage you.

8 Request feedback whatever the outcome

If you got the job then hurrah! Celebrate the start of a brand-new adventure. You might have a notice period to serve and, if so, it is always a good idea to ask your new employer if there is any background reading you could do before you start, or an upcoming work event you could attend – this shows your excitement about joining the company and your desire to start embedding into your new role.

If on the other hand you didn't get the job, then write to the HR department when they send you the rejection email to ask for as detailed feedback as possible, as there might have been oversights that you could learn from. I even ask for feedback when successful at interviews as there is always something to learn and panels do usually identify gaps in your answers which could make for good learning. I also find it helpful to self-reflect once I have left the room and ask myself if there was anything I could have responded to better. Confucius rightly said: "Glory is not in never falling but in rising every time we fall." We can all strive towards becoming better versions of ourselves.

Project teams, like any other team, are not immune to conflict or challenging behaviour. It is almost inevitable that every project professional will at some point face the challenge of dealing with a toxic relationship. It might not even be your fault; it may be a project that you have inherited or a sudden, unexpected event when a great relationship turns toxic overnight.

Dealing with such situations can be tough, but there are processes that can help and many tips and techniques to try out. Toxic and dysfunctional behaviour within any team can lead to many problems, including performance management issues, poor morale, breakdown in trust and an inability to meet team objectives.

You may be tempted to shout and demand change when regular conflict and dysfunctional behaviour occurs, especially when you are in a position of power. We would strongly advise against this approach. There are far better ways to establish good practices in project teams and influence people around you to defuse conflict and toxic behaviours.

Of course, in today's complex business environment we are often working in virtual teams across boundaries and with other diversity issues. Whatever the setting and the challenges, the ideas below can help you navigate your path and build a great, happy team.

Rules of engagement
Setting a project team off on the right foot always helps to create a healthy, motivated team culture, and yet this stage of the team development process is often overlooked. We are all probably guilty of focusing too quickly on the task rather than establishing team processes and practices to create a more holistic framework. Why not try allocating time to get to know one another? Each person should not only introduce themselves but share information about their

TURNING AROUND A TOXIC PROJECT TEAM

EVERY SAVVY PROJECT PROFESSIONAL NEEDS TO KNOW HOW TO HANDLE CONFLICT ON THEIR TEAMS. EVEN BETTER IS UNDERSTANDING HOW TO CREATE TOXICITY-FREE ZONES. HERE, VIKI HOLTON AND FIONA ELSA DENT OF HULT INTERNATIONAL BUSINESS SCHOOL GIVE THEIR ADVICE

interests and experiences that are relevant to the project.

Once people have a sense of personal connection, then begin to move towards discussing the project, its objectives, timelines, performance criteria and who does what. Talk about preferred ways of working, particularly meeting frequency and processes to ensure all team members contribute and have an active role. Build a process that involves regular reviews and feedback about both the task progress and the way that people are working together.

No matter how busy things are, make sure you set aside time for this. Not a brief few minutes at the beginning or end of a meeting, but a significant timeslot to encourage personal connections between the team members. Don't forget to regularly revisit these project team guidelines to demonstrate that 'this is how we operate around here'. It is particularly important when you on-board new team members. By the same token, recruit people who understand the importance of getting on well with others as well as achieving the task, and take care to identify and avoid recruiting toxic disruptors.

Handling conflict effectively

Conflict can be healthy as it encourages debate, discussion and idea development. The challenge is when conflict is due to toxic behaviour such as competitiveness, organisational politics or personality clashes. A simple and effective process for dealing with conflict is to:

- focus on clarifying the situation with those involved
- explore possible solutions and identify a mutually agreeable outcome
- agree a way ahead for all involved
- review and learn from this process

Ensure that you create a culture of healthy conflict where collaboration is the order of the

day rather than competition. Encourage constructive dialogue and respect for other team members' perspectives. In this type of team culture, intellectual debate and difference are valued and lead to better outcomes.

Dealing with toxic behaviour

People who regularly display challenging behaviour towards or with others can lead to significant disruption. First, though, it's important to know what we mean by toxic behaviour. We have identified a few that you may relate to:

- complaining and seeing the negative in everything with little positive contribution
- the dominating know-it-all who takes over conversations, intimidating other team members and dismissing any new ideas offered
- disengaging with the process and task of the team, and showing a lack of interest, commitment and involvement, leading to resentment from other team members
- playing the blame game, where everybody else is at fault apart from the individual themselves

You can probably add more behaviours from your own experience. The key steps to unblock these behaviours are:

Help the people involved move from a 'what's in it for me?' mindset to a 'what's in it for the team?' one

- identify and address the situation early
- clearly state the problem and the impact on the team
- work with the individual(s) to discuss the consequences of no change and agree a solution

It's important to stay focused and deal with toxic behaviour quickly without letting it develop further. Help the people involved move from a 'what's in it for me?' mindset to a 'what's in it for the team?' one, which implies a collective responsibility within the team. This is a crucial component of success. Why will people want to change? How can you help them to recognise the powerful impact there will be on the relationship between you when it moves beyond toxic? Even smart operators often forget to change their mindset from 'what's in it for me (or my team)?', whereas the crucial dimension is all about others and finding ways to develop a great partnership. Don't forget to

learn from these situations and to develop tools and techniques to help you handle similar situations in the future.

Move on from the blame game towards a new, more positive mindset. What do each of us need to do to improve our work relationship? What will good look like? Both sides need to be willing to change or the discussion will go nowhere. Talk about and assess this in the early stages of any discussion so each side is clear how important this will be for success. Don't frame the problem as 'your problem' but talk in more inclusive terms, such as 'us', 'our' and 'together we can'.

Start small. Don't be too ambitious (or get too complicated) at first with your negotiating. Identifying simple, quick wins will encourage everyone to continue. Similarly, focus on the key issues which will make a difference. There's little point in asking everyone to attend joint meetings if little happens as a result of those meetings.

Not every toxic relationship can be turned around, but we believe that most can. Work smarter, not simply harder, at the issue, and rather than confrontation, explore the power and possibilities of the change you both agree for the future will make all the difference.

Sustaining a positive team culture

Creating and developing a successful and committed project team culture rarely happens by accident. It can feel daunting, whether you are setting up a team from scratch or taking over an established team. However, the principles above will apply in either setting. Remember, whether you are the leader or a team member, high-performance teams will achieve more because all members are equally committed and involved and work together effectively.

Having a practical framework with rules of engagement for the processes and practices adopted within the team means everybody understands and buys into creating and sustaining a positive team culture. It will be self-evident when you are on the right track as you will feel that openness, information sharing and high levels of trust are standard behaviour. These behaviours will only develop if you nurture and pay attention to both task and process. Regular reviews and feedback are vital to ensure this happens.

If you struggle with any of these issues, find supporters to help you; for instance, mentors or relationship coaches who are independent and have good reputations in their organisation can be influential and supportive. Tapping into their knowledge, energy and expertise can help defuse a difficult situation and bring people back together. We have seen this approach used equally well by inexperienced project professionals as well as at the most senior (and sometimes most intransigent) levels in an organisation. We all

You should deal with conflict and toxic behaviour speedily. Do not let it fester as that will intensify the problem

have people, those 'influencers' whom we look up to, whether it is the departmental director, more experienced colleagues, a chief executive or our previous boss. You don't have to solve this all alone – ask for experts to help you change the situation.

Remember that you cannot be successful 100% of the time. There is the poisonous effect of people (and cultures) who are blind to the power of a win-win situation. Instead, they only recognise win-lose, in other words that they are driven to win while everyone else will be the losers. Power dynamics also make a difference here and if the individual or people involved hold more influence and position than you, then this can stymie the potential of resolution. However, a clever negotiator can create a solution that represents and encapsulates win-win. Similarly, some smart offline discussions with other key players can make all the difference, pulling a few strings in the background as they exert their influence and offer advice and guidance to others who are involved.

Probably the most important lesson to take away is that you should deal with conflict and toxic behaviour speedily. Do not let it fester as that will simply intensify the problem and make it more difficult to resolve. Remember that solely focusing on task will only get you so far – your superpower in this area is factoring in the people and relationship dimensions to create a successful and high-performance team.

Winning Together: The secrets of better work relationships **by Patricia Hind, Fiona Elsa Dent and Viki Holton is published by Pearson**

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MAKING THE CLOSING OUT OF A PROJECT A TEAM SUCCESS

SHANE FITZPATRICK, DIRECTOR OF THE STRATEGIC PROGRAMME OFFICE AT ULSTER UNIVERSITY, HAD THE PRIVILEGE OF US PRESIDENT JOE BIDEN OPENING THE NEW BELFAST CAMPUS HIS TEAM HAD RECENTLY DELIVERED. IT HELPED THE TEAM CLOSE THE PROJECT ON A HIGH, BUT IN THE ABSENCE OF A WORLD LEADER CELEBRATING YOUR PROGRAMME, WHAT CAN YOU DO TO HELP YOUR TEAM MOVE ON?

Lots has been written about the technical process of closing projects successfully, but less explored is the effect on the project teams. Hitting difficult deadlines can become all-consuming. Life moves pretty fast, and there is no chance to stop and look around. The question of what happens to high-performing teams in the immediate period post-delivery isn't often discussed.

I was appointed as the Director of the Strategic Programme Office at Ulster University as part of a four-year initiative to deliver transformation. Ulster University has now opened the largest university city centre campus development in Europe. As the post-implementation reviews come to an end, the people responsible for delivering transformation all find themselves asking what comes next. Without careful management there is a risk that the team spirit that helped achieve so much could quickly erode or, worse still, sour.

Timing is the big challenge
The biggest challenge I faced closing out the project in a situation such as

this was timing. Ironically, you have a team at the top of their game in terms of experience and professional credentials just as your project ends. That makes them hot property. They've driven hard towards a deadline, but it's inevitable that some offers will start to come their way before you have completed everything you need to.

You want to keep the band together until the last moment, but

equally you can't be selfish: you need to consider the individuals' needs as part of your closure process, as anything less will drive people away. It's a real balancing act. You need to ensure that it is genuinely in people's best interests to stay until the task is complete. You can do that with contractual or financial incentives, but in my experience that motivates people to not want to leave when it's

Far left: Shane Fitzpatrick. Left: US President Joe Biden opens the new Belfast campus (below).

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actually far better to motivate them to want to stay.

The scale of the challenge

A brand-new team was created with a four-year remit. There was loads to be done, and a clear and defined delivery date. While everyone had their eyes on delivery, I needed to be conscious that we would hit a cliff-edge in terms of resource requirement. I recognise that the team would become increasingly aware of this as the delivery dates neared and that some might be tempted away before completion.

The type of skills required to bring drive and deliver new technology, new ways of working and software solutions were relatively specialist, particularly in the smaller market of Northern Ireland, but also within the higher education industry, which is still developing in terms of its project management maturity.

These transformation initiatives would only be successful if tailored for higher education and focused on creating vibrant campus communities, creating environments where staff, students and visitors choose to spend time, sharing knowledge and ideas. Early on, I concluded that the teams involved in the delivery had to fully immerse themselves in the university environment and culture if we had any chance of success, but doing that was an overhead in terms of focusing on pure delivery.

It was an ambitious plan because of the amount of transformation we committed to and the sheer scale of the move. Despite the complications arising from the pandemic and remote working, as the sector re-emerged and Ulster University committed to face-to-face learning, the importance of this type of work was paramount. This required a team of experts from many different backgrounds to come together, and quickly assimilate and deliver the needs of students and staff.

We threw the net wide in terms of people's backgrounds – banking, events, engineering and media to name a few – and we also turned to our own graduate schemes for resource and looked for project expertise internally to establish a high-performing team quickly.

Ensuring buy-in

We ensured buy-in by keeping the work interesting. There is always something fascinating happening at the university – it's what makes it such a great environment to work in. So we made sure that people at all levels of the team had exposure to all the different elements of our work. This was quite an overhead in terms of agile management, but I felt it was essential for long-term buy-in and so for our collective success.

Then there's investment. One prerequisite for people joining the team was a commitment to continuous personal development. Several team members took master's degrees at the university's business school; others undertook professional qualifications. This commitment to investing meant the team recognised that they were being upskilled and prepared for their next roles in a proactive way, alongside the experience they were gaining.

We encouraged people to work across various project workstreams. This was difficult, but it meant we could support peaks in workload easily and

> **The commitment to investing meant the team recognised that they were being upskilled and prepared for their next roles in a proactive way**

resulted in a great community spirit within the team. Lockdown helped, as we all got to know each other in a period of extreme personal pressure. We brought some of that learning back into the workplace. We assumed the best in people and supported whatever flexibility they asked for unquestioningly. This approach was proved right, as we received so much unwavering dedication in response.

Future plans

What's next for the team? The university, of course, wants to keep them internally to ensure that the thread of knowledge remains unbroken, but the team members were selected for being high performers and they are rightly ambitious. My first responsibility is to the employer, to help them retain that knowledge, but I also felt a responsibility to find the right thing for everyone. I have recently spent lots of my down time exploring internal opportunities with individuals. We set up mock interview training, and helped people with CVs and applications.

Of the team, 80% are now in new positions at the university and around half of those will stay together to deliver new projects.

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Leading the team and seeing everything they achieved was a privilege, so it was important to do the right thing as that time together came to an end

Some will start new positions in other departments, hopefully carrying what they have learned with us and certainly knowing that there remains a network of colleagues who can offer support.

Two of our rising stars have gone to graduate placements in a large consultancy firm. They flew through the interview process supported by their managers, who acted as mentors.

It's an odd feeling to be proud of staff who are leaving the organisation, but this is a great opportunity for these graduates and the development work we did with them during their time with us was a good bootcamp.

Final advice

From my perspective, building and leading the team, and seeing everything they achieved, was a privilege, so it was important to do the right thing as that time together came to an end. They faced down enormous challenges with total commitment and confidence. Any plaudits I received were built on the back of the many hours they put in. With that in mind, I can't wait to support them as they go on to the next stage of their careers.

I'm really looking forward to seeing where each of their careers go. Some will rise within the university and others will go elsewhere. Finding the right opportunity will help them flourish and I hope our paths continue to cross for many years into the future.

SHANE FITZPATRICK'S TOP 10 TIPS
ON HELPING YOUR TEAM MOVE ON

1. Remember – even change teams don't like uncertainty! It is important to encourage people to be daring. We tell our colleagues not to be afraid of new challenges – let's take our own medicine.

2. Fluidity in the team is probably the new norm. Get ahead of the game; there is no harm in having contingency plans.

3. If someone asks for certainty, be honest. There isn't a textbook approach for this stage, but empathy, fairness and integrity are always the place to start. Listen more and talk less.

4. There is still a need to deliver and close out your project in a managed way. Maintain project disciplines even as you cross the finish line.

5. Take the initiative. Talk to people at all levels within the team about their ambitions; make time for those who supported you in achieving success.

6. You can't predict who will go or where they will go. Encourage open dialogue to minimise any surprises.

7. Supplement resource with temporary solutions. Be fair and don't just expect 'remainers' to pick up tasks.

8. Recognise that you are in uncharted territory. Getting people 'up for it' after a major success can be tough. Work hard to see things from the individual's perspective. It is important to tailor your approach for everyone's circumstances – it's not a one-size-fits-all solution.

9. If the chance to go to a different organisation is the right fit for a team member, support them. Anything else will come back to bite you. Selfish behaviour is corrosive; never stand in someone's way. Celebrate their successes even if they are leaving you. If it's to move onwards and upwards, embrace that.

10. Help your team move forward with confidence. If you think they are stars, chances are people will be queuing up to meet them.

HOW TO THRIVE UNDER PRESSURE

(AND WITH THE CLOCK TICKING 24/7)

SAM BERNARD, ASSISTANT PROJECT MANAGER AT BALFOUR BEATTY, TELLS CHARLES ORTON-JONES HOW HE'S RELISHING HIS WORK ON RAILWAYS IN A CAREER HE DIDN'T PLAN FOR

The writer Dan Brown, famous for *The Da Vinci Code*, says there are three ingredients to a heart-stopping narrative. He calls them the three Cs. There's the crucible, which is the arena where the hero is trapped, such as a burning building. The second C is the clock – a deadline to race against. And there's a third C, the contract, whereby the reader is promised a resolution. Together they create a pressure cooker where the characters thrive or perish.

A day in the life of Sam Bernard is pure thriller with the full three Cs. He's an Assistant Project Manager for Balfour Beatty, working on railways. With every job he's thrown into a crucible and the clock starts ticking. "We work at night and we've got access to the track or station for maybe five hours," he explains. "We go in and do our job. Then we've got to get the railway operational when the time is up or the morning trains won't run."

Relishing the grind

Any error and the world knows about it. A colleague recently ran into problems at Clapham Junction. "It was only an hour or so, but obviously the morning trains were held up." This is Europe's busiest station we're talking about, with 200 trains an hour. "I'm not familiar with how much that cost, but I do know it was a big no-no," says Bernard. He reflects for a moment. "I shudder to think if that happened at any of my jobs."

Bernard's more than up to the task. He joined Balfour Beatty in 2018, and last year he was nominated for APM's Young Project Professional of the Year Award. He's also been shortlisted for the prestigious *Construction News* Awards in the Rising Star category.

Bernard relishes the grind and pressure of sorting out Britain's railways with one eye on the stopwatch. There's no rest in his role. Even when he's off the job, there's always the chance of an incident requiring his intervention. "When

> **"When we call this a 24/7 job we mean it literally. My phone is always on. If I get a call at 2am then it is usually serious. I've got to jolt into gear"**

we call this a 24/7 job we mean it literally. My phone is always on. If I get a call at 2am then it is usually serious. I've got to jolt into gear," he says.

His current portfolio is broad – pretty much everything related to maintaining the national rail infrastructure. He's currently adding tactile surfaces to the platform floors for the visually impaired, which is a nationwide commitment by the government. There's also demolition work, fixing station roofs, digging troughs for cables, asbestos removal and refurbishing

whole stations. It's his job to make sure the workers are given realistic workloads without missing the daily deadline.

"Last Saturday we got a demolition job," he recalls. "We were knocking down the relay room and old signal houses next to the track. We had access from midnight to 8am. We did the work and were away by 6.30am. You've got to make sure there's a bit of contingency time in case something unforeseen happens. It's about managing risk."

And so far, so good. "No accidents on my sites," he reveals. "Which is probably my proudest achievement given the man hours racked up each day, each week, each period."

An accidental career

The quirk of Bernard's career is that he's an unlikely star. He's not an engineer, and nor did he have any desire to become a project manager, having studied history at the University of Birmingham (graduating with a first-class degree). "My career is accidental," says Bernard. "I joined Balfour Beatty in business development. I did two years until a manager said if there's a recession the first people to go are in that department. I wanted to learn how we actually build stuff, so I signed up for project management. It didn't take me long to realise project management is fantastic. It's the most stressful thing and the most rewarding. After five months, I knew I was sticking with it."

CV: SAM BERNARD

2018 Joined Balfour Beatty
2020 Assistant Project
Manager, Balfour Beatty
Education
2015–2017 History, University
of Birmingham, first-class
honours; ran Burn FM, the
student radio station
Qualifications
● APM PMQ
● PTS rail qualification
● Institute of Leadership
Management Level 3
Hobbies
"I play football each Sunday.
Eleven-a-side. The perfect way
to unwind after a tough week."

Not being an engineer in a role entirely focused on construction is hard. "The normal path is to be an engineer and work your way up to a senior role and then into project manager. I jumped into the role at the beginning. So my biggest challenge is that I'm not an engineer in an engineering company. I'm not as technical as others are," he explains.

He took a short while to overcome imposter syndrome – a common feeling among young project managers who get promoted fast. "I met a guy from Balfour Beatty in a pub in Canary Wharf. I said I'm not an engineer, but work as a project manager. He said, 'So what, I'm from commercial, in quantity surveying, and now I'm a project manager.' I realised since then that there are many senior managers who have a similar background to me."

A high-level perspective

Now he realises his difference is a strength. "It's my added value. I don't need to get bogged down in technical detail about which nuts and bolts go where. I can

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maintain a high-level perspective. Frankly, engineers don't want micromanaging. It's left me free to do high-level strategic thinking."

This ability to step back means he's building a growing empire. That is reflected in his workload. He runs 15 sites across Kent. "Each of them requires people on site, managing multiple sub-contractors and managing a client," he says. "Then there are the commercial aspects of those 15 sites. And I've got to manage my own team. It's an intense challenge – but fun."

> **"I don't get bogged down in technical detail. Engineers don't want micromanaging. It's left me free to do high-level strategic thinking"**

Now he's got a new role as a mentor. "As time's gone on, some of the young graduates and young engineers have developed and can take work from me. They can lead

parts of the portfolio I'm managing." The man who never dreamed he'd be a project manager is now a life-long fan. "This is what I want to do," he says. "The variety is great – the responsibility, the accountability. And in construction when you finish the job, you have something in the ground you've done," he reflects.

The challenges keep him hooked, and the adrenaline of working to deadlines, with zero room for manoeuvre, is irreplaceable. "This is my career," says Bernard. "I'll stay in project management until I retire."

SAM'S TIPS FOR YOUNG PROJECT PROFESSIONALS

1 Have confidence in your ability
Things will always go wrong on a project. I've never worked on a project that's gone 100% right. That's okay. The trick is to back yourself. You are in that role for a reason. When colleagues know more than you, that's okay too. You don't need to know all the answers; it's your job to bring all the talent together. If there really is an area where you don't feel confident, then think about it. Reflect on why you feel that way. And talk to those around you about how to improve. You'll find a way to get better at it.

2 Get a mentor
Ideally find someone who's not involved with your work. I have two. My first mentor was a very senior project manager whom I respected and who had the same background as me. He helped change my mindset. He gave me the confidence to realise I was actually really good at my job. The second works for Balfour Beatty, but I met him in a pub. We had a few beers, got talking and formed a friendship. Both are informal mentors. They are people I can call and say I've got problems with a project and talk it through. There are massive benefits to having mentors, to having someone whom you can ask, 'What do you think?'

3 Know your contracts
Project managers are defined by their contracts. In construction we have the New Engineering Contract. The contractor is obligated to manage the project in a way that is collaborative and seeks the best resolution for both parties. You have very tight restrictions; for example, needing to respond to phone notifications within 10 days, otherwise you lose the ability to ask for more money. No matter the project, you need to know your contract inside out. My tip is to go on courses. Balfour Beatty has amazing courses to train staff in the nuances of contracts. The APM Project Management Qualification (PMQ) exam also goes into a lot of detail. Become a master of contracts.

4 Get good at networking
Network with senior people. And network among your peers, including all the people you work alongside. I'm not a natural at networking. I can't say I flourish at an event with 200 people. But I understand the importance of making sure I build relationships. The people you work with, work for, and those who work for you – treat them all with respect and that becomes a form of networking. You also need to build your reputation as a leader with senior people. As your career grows and you climb the ladder, you'll have people around you to guide you and help.

5 Ask questions
This relates to my background. I'm not an engineer. I do not have a background in construction. I realised that is fine. Project managers in my industry sit over construction, safety, engineering, finance and people specialists. It's impossible to be an expert in all of these. So just ask questions. Engineers will love being asked about their area of expertise. Keep asking questions and your knowledge will grow. A project manager needs to be able to learn from others and rely on their knowledge.

PUBLIC REGISTER OF ChPPs

The following individuals make up the latest cohort to achieve Chartered Project Professional status with APM. Congratulations to you all, from those based in the UK and Italy to the US and New Zealand! Full details of the criteria for achieving chartered status and the routes to get there can be found at apm.org.uk/chartered-standard, where you can also view the full Register of Chartered Project Professionals.

APM
Chartered Project Professional

Name	Country
Adeyemi Ajayi	UK
Dami Ajewole	**UK**
Ali Al Khabouri	OMN
Dosti Ali	**UK**
William Allan	UK
Popa Anca	**UK**
Kevin Ashcroft	UK
Michael Babbs	**UK**
Roheel Babla	UK
Sanjay Kumar Bafana	**UK**
Alison Baptiste	UK
Daniele Baroni	**ITA**
Katy Bater	UK
David Belshaw	**UK**
Stephen Best	UK
Jagbir Bhuhi	**UK**
David Birks	UK
Cheryl-Lynne Bishop-Wells	**UK**
Alan Blanch	UK
Morgan Bloodworth	**AUS**
Jenni Borg	UK
Sian Bowers	**UK**
Steve Bowers	UK
Michael Bowles	**UK**
Chris Brown	UK
Drew Brown	**UK**
James Buckley	UK
Eoin Byrne	**UK**
Dean Callaway	UK
Wales Cheung	**UK**
Les Collins	UK
Joanne Coote	**UK**
Ryan Crellin	UK
Victoria Crossley Smith	**UK**
Paul Dailey	UK
Alan Daly	**UK**
Tony Davies	UK
Moataz Dawood	**EGY**
Emily Dawson	UK
Helen Donaghy	**UK**
Rebecca Dorey	UK
Leigh Draper	**UK**
Styliani Dunsmore	UK
Carl Duranthon	**UK**
Gabriel Durojaye	UK
Paul Edmondson	**UK**
Richard Edwards	UK
Wassim El Chayati	**ITA**
Nicole Essien	UK

Name	Country
Osian Evans	**UK**
Joel Everson	UK
Elaine Falconer	**UK**
Dean Fardoe	UK
Brittany Ferguson	**UK**
Hugh Ferguson	UK
Scott Fisher	**UK**
Robert Fleming	UK
Lorna Forrest	**UK**
Stephen Frame	UK
Thomas Freeman	**UK**
Diamond Gaddu	UK
Mark Gendle	**UK**
Wayne George	UK
Andrew Gibson	**UK**
Jack Gill	UK
Martin Goldby	**UK**
Matt Gordon	UK
Chantelle Yasmin Graham	**UK**
Mark Graham	UK
Julie Gregory	**UK**
Max Hacon	UK
Emma Haggart	**UK**
Angela Hammond	USA
Laura Hampshire	**UK**
John Hansford	UK
Paula Hassall	**UK**
Gary Haythornthwaite	UK
Richard Hellings	**UK**
Amanda Hopewell-Campion	UK
David Howes	**UK**
Karen Hugill	UK
Melanie Hume	**UK**
Gareth Hurley	UK
Adrian Iswariah	**UK**
Simon James	UK
Chris Jameson	**UK**
Anthony Johnson	UK
Michael Johnson	**UK**
Bryan Jolley	USA
Robert Jones	**UK**
Marina Kaur-Channing	UK
Thomas Kenyon	**UK**
Sylvi Kerr	UK
Jamie Keyte	**UK**
Samina Khan	UK
Robert Komensen	**UK**
Dola Kumoluyi	UK
Andrew Lambden	**UK**

Name	Country
Nermeen Latif	UK
Michael Lawrence	**UK**
Toby Lawrence	UK
Katy Lin	**UK**
Eliana Linares-Gonzalez	UK
Jennifer Livesey	**UK**
Robert Lough	UK
Murdo MacRitchie	**UK**
Terry Madden-Nadeau	UK
David Magee	**UK**
Lisa McCrone	UK
Scott McCrorie	**UK**
Sam Mehmet	UK
Miles Milbank	**UK**
Peter Mill	UK
Thomas Milner	**UK**
Amy Molyneux	UK
Gareth Moores	**UK**
Diana Carolina Morales Gonzalez	UK
Katya Moses	**UK**
Natasha Moth	UK
Matthew Mousley	**UK**
Jonathan Munoz	CAN
Garry Murray	**UK**
Edward Murtagh	USA
Chris Musgrave	**UK**
Aslan Najafov	AZE
Thomas Neave	**UK**
Cheng Ngo	UK
Peter Nicholson	**NZL**
Emeka Ojimba	UK
Malcolm Parsons	**UK**
Andrew Parton	UK
Ankit Patel	**UK**
Craig Patterson	UK
Euan Patterson	**UK**
Dominick Pearce	UK
Claudia Philps	**UK**
Thomas Player	UK
Gary Porter	**UK**
Laurence Quinn	UK
Gaynor Quinn	**UK**
Akileshwar RKN	FR
Darryl Ramlakhan	**KWT**
Emmanuel Ryan Ramsahai	TTO
Christopher Ramsay	**UK**
Matthew Reed	UK
Oliver Reilly	**IRL**

Name	Country
Calvin Roper	**UK**
Joanna Rowland	UK
Frankie Rushton	**UK**
Alexander Ryder	UK
Lorna Samways	**UK**
Dyanne Sargeant	UK
Indranil Sarkar	**USA**
Christopher Scott	UK
Benjamin Sebastian-Green	**UK**
Shrenik Shah	IND
Himani Sharma	**UK**
Innes Simpson	UK
Jason Smith	**UK**
Stephen Smith	UK
Steven Smith	**UK**
Jack Smith	UK
Mark Smith	**UK**
Rob Somers	UK
Rebecca Sparkes	**UK**
Robert Spencer	UK
Dean Statton	**UK**
Kirsten Stewart	UK
Jennifer Storry	**UK**
Martin Sturgeon	UK
Mark Sutherland	**UK**
Catriona Taylor	UK
Peter Taylor	**UK**
Steven Theobald	UK
Mark Threipland	**UK**
Victoria Tilling	UK
Lee Tomlinson	**UK**
Borja Trashorras Mazon	UK
Aneta Tumilowicz	**UK**
Robert Tunnicliffe	UK
Enor Uche	**UK**
Lawrence Underwood	UK
Philip Varney	**UK**
Gary Wainwright	UK
Andrew Wall	**UK**
Jonathan Wareham	UK
Alistair Watters	**UK**
Anton Wilkieson	UK
Jeffrey Winstanley	**UK**
Pete Winters	UK
Claire Woolford	**UK**
Darren Yates	BRA
Jason Yaxley	**UK**
Arwin Zijl	NLD

DEAR SUSANNE

One of my direct reports is not performing as expected and I'm unsure how to approach the situation. I'm new in my role and would appreciate your advice.

Working with an underperforming team member is a situation that most managers have experienced. You may find that their engagement is low, that they miss deadlines, make silly mistakes or create unnecessary conflict. Dealing with someone who is not up to par can be frustrating and time consuming. If you approach it as a challenge rather than an issue, however, you could see the situation turn around dramatically.

Clean up your own act first

It's tempting to escalate performance issues to HR straight away, but before we start complaining about a team member, we need to sweep in front of our own door. As a first step, I recommend setting very clear expectations with your direct report that both of you can agree to. When you delegate a task, agree what needs to get done, what they shouldn't be doing, what a good outcome looks like, and when it will be completed by. Don't make it a one-way conversation as that won't build trust and get their commitment. Instead, ask them what their thoughts are, what issues they foresee and when they can get it done. In other words, use questions to help them think through the task and flush out issues on their own.

You don't necessarily have to agree how they will do the work. If your direct report is lacking in motivation, figuring out the 'how' could be very motivating for them. If they are junior, however, and don't have the skills, you will need to train and coach

them. Ask them: "What support do you need from me in order to deliver this? How often would you like me to check in with you?" The goal is to give them the support they need while avoiding micromanaging them.

With a poor performer, it's important that the assignments you give them aren't too big. Start with something small; agree what they will do, by when,

Don't be overly critical or focus only on the negative, as that could trigger them to feel insecure

and what support they need. Then monitor the situation.

Give considerate feedback

If your direct report continues to perform poorly in spite of your support and mutually agreed assignments, you will need to give them clear feedback. Don't be overly critical or focus only on the negative, as that could trigger them to feel insecure and to perform even worse. Highlight some of the aspects that you feel they're doing well and tell them that you want to support them and help them improve. Making the team member feel safe and wanted is a key aspect of getting through to them.

At the same time, you do have to be clear about which of their behaviours they need to improve on. Don't just say that they make too many mistakes, that there is a

Susanne Madsen is an internationally recognised project leadership coach, trainer and consultant. She is the author of *The Project Management Coaching Workbook* and *The Power of Project Leadership*. For more information, visit www.susannemadsen.com

problem with their attitude or that they need to be more proactive. That's too generic and not helpful. To be effective, highlight specific behaviours and give examples. Also tell them why their behaviour is problematic and then give them specific suggestions on effective behaviour. Bear in mind that if the team member knew how to do things differently, they probably would be doing it already.

The key message is to be kind and supportive, yet firm. We need to treat people properly, give them the benefit of the doubt and be specific about what we expect from them. Listen and be accommodating, and if after all that the performance hasn't improved, it's time to escalate to HR.

Do you have a question for Susanne? Email mail@susannemadsen.com

PROJECT ME

WE ASK PROJECT PROFESSIONALS HOW THEY LIKE TO RESET, REPLENISH AND REINVIGORATE THEMSELVES OVER THE SUMMER BEFORE RETURNING TO WORK

Book your holidays early so you don't miss out
Donna Unitt, Head of Delivery, Rocket Consulting

It's never a good time to take a holiday in the project world. I learnt early on to book my holidays at the start of the year so they could not be changed, that way you have something to look forward to and know that when project dates change – as they do – you will still have your holiday and will just have to work around it. You are important and you being your best means needing time to replenish and reset. I have seen so many people burn out as holidays were not booked; there was never a right time to take them, so they just didn't. A break, even if it's just away from the screen for a few days, is really good for your own wellbeing, and when you come back you feel refreshed and motivated again. You don't only owe it to yourself, you also owe it to your family.

### Staycation, travel abroad, relax and indulge in adventure
Deniece Miller, Assistant Project Manager, Calfordseaden

Staycation, travel abroad, relax and indulge in adventure. These are all important. Do whatever it is that is available to you and calling you! For me to be productive at work, I believe in being well rested. Things like have a relaxing bath, eating well and watching my favourite show on Netflix are prime examples. Other ways to feel good about work are by enjoying your weekend, keeping busy with close ones and getting out in nature. I did a 10k run last Sunday and was so ready for Monday in the office! I woke up grateful with a sense of accomplishment. Another favourite is to have a massage or facial, something that allows you to close your eyes for a few minutes, totally switch off and relax. What will you do this week?
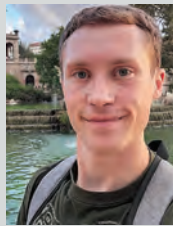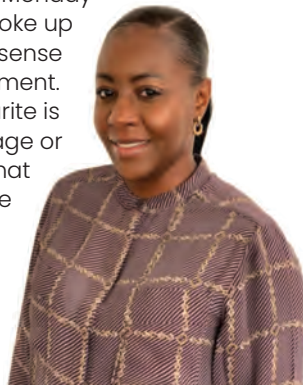
Be active to give your mind a break
Jack Stacey, Degree Apprentice, BAE Systems

Managing projects is a rewarding career; however, it can also be stressful and tiring. I believe that taking time off to focus on you is vital for personal wellbeing, which then feeds into productivity and drive when you're back working. For me, relaxing has to involve doing something. When I'm engaged in an activity, I'm not thinking about work at all, as my focus is elsewhere. I enjoy a variety of sports, such as running (perfect for goal setting), jujitsu (to teach commitment and discipline) and tennis (to spend time with others). I find these are great ways to focus on personal goals and growth. Additionally, I love to travel. Having been to a variety of places around the world, I've found that exploring different cultures opens the mind, opens you up to different ways of doing things. Like in projects, there isn't always just one way of doing things.

Long dog walks
Bryant Yates, Deputy Group Director, WSP

I find the summer holidays a perfect time to switch off devices and reconnect with friends and family. It's also a perfect time to give the dog some long adventurous walks I can never contemplate during the normal working week.
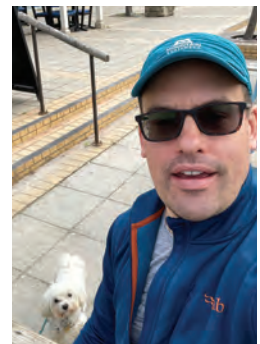
Clear the decks

Emma-Ruth Arnaz-Pemberton, Director of Consulting Services, Wellingtone, and Chair, APM PMO SIG

Taking the time to reinvigorate over the summer period is key for all PMO professionals. So, before finishing for a break it is important to clear the decks by doing some accounting of our project portfolio and also our teams. Design a roadmap for two or three months, ensuring that everyone who is available knows the objectives; use this time to analyse lessons learned and identify goals with a focus on internal changes that we can initiate, and maintain community and training events for those who stay in the office. This leaves your head clear for a personal reset. A good way to do this is to read something new and inspirational so you can come back to the day job full of new ideas for your PMO. It also helps you to switch off and focus on one thing and not everything else that needs doing around the house.

Long weekends do the trick

Tom Evans, Project Manager, Ofgem

Many people tend to save their holidays until the summer months for one big break. However, personally it is of greater importance that I reset and recharge by having a good number of long weekends throughout the year to enjoy my hobbies. At the moment these are playing chess, gaming and cooking exciting new food. However, when I do have a significant break I like to travel, whether that be on my own or with my partner. If there is time, I will go on a training course so I am ready and excited to apply what I have learnt on my return to work.

Use the summer as a career break

**Jay Kaminski, Commissioned Officer, RAF**

This summer represents a bit of a milestone for me, while also offering a real opportunity to relax, regroup and reset my mind for a new challenge. After 20 years in the RAF, my final day in uniform is just before the summer holidays, thereby providing me with six weeks off before I start my new project management career in September. Having this much time off is a first for me and I intend to make the most of it. It provides me with the opportunity to spend some quality time with my children. I can devote all my attention to them, take them swimming, out to the park on our bikes and just ground myself in their presence.

Holidays are like sinusoidal waves

Amrik Randhawa, Associate Director, Waterman Aspen

The modern way of working can be very demanding. We all need to listen to our bodies and take time to refresh. I see the need for holidays being like a stress-themed sinusoidal wave with the difference in peaks being about eight weeks. For me, the key is to mitigate the stress levels before the holiday and on return by being ahead of the curve in terms of requirements and expectations. That's the hard bit. Once on leave, I think it's important to scrap the routine and ditch the work mobile phone. For me, relaxation through walking and being near the sea is key as well as the exploration that comes with it.
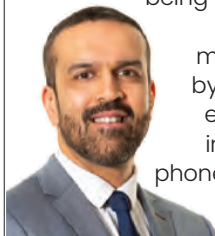
Grow your own fruit and veg

Liz Bohler, Senior Delivery Manager, MI-GSO | PCUBED

My allotment! In 2014, I was a contestant on BBC 2's *Great British Allotment Challenge*. Since then, I've grown vegetables, fruit and flowers at home. Just this weekend, after a three-year wait, I got my own plot in Denton, Manchester. My plans are to grow salad, winter veg for our Christmas dinner and flowers for cut displays at home. A fresh morning, with cup of tea in hand and the calm of the plot, is my switch-off from my fabulous new job at M | P. We're establishing a new northern hub and it's exciting, fast-paced work.

PROJECT:
TO VOLUNTEER FOR KIDNEY RESEARCH UK

VIJAY LUTHRA, ASSOCIATE PARTNER AND DIRECTOR OF OPERATIONS FOR TRANSFORMATION AT CAPITA, IS ALSO A RENAL TRANSPLANTEE WHO VOLUNTEERS WITH THE CHARITY KIDNEY RESEARCH UK

Growing up with nephrotic syndrome, a type of kidney disease, there was always a possibility that my kidneys would eventually fail and I'd need a transplant. When they did, I was lucky that I only had to spend 17 months on dialysis before I received a donated kidney. That was in 2006 and since then I've mostly been able to resume life as normal, including achieving ChPP and becoming an APM Fellow. When Sandra Currie, CEO of Kidney Research UK, asked me to get involved with the charity's new external advisory group – the Development Advisory Board (DAB) – to support the charity's ambition to accelerate the translation of research into tangible innovations, I was only too happy to agree.

There is a need to bring new innovations forward quickly to alleviate suffering from kidney disease

Accelerating patient benefits

There is no cure for kidney disease – transplants, like dialysis, are 'renal replacement therapy' – so there is a real need to bring new innovations forward quickly to alleviate the suffering that kidney disease causes and to enhance the ability of the NHS to manage kidney disease. The vision of Kidney Research UK is to free lives from the restrictions, fear, anxiety and life-limiting nature of kidney disease,

SHUTTERSTOCK

I have put my portfolio prioritisation skills to good use in helping the charity understand where the maximum benefit could be achieved

which is on the rise: 20 people a day are diagnosed with kidney failure, a number that will continue to go up.

The DAB advises and makes recommendations to the Trustee Board on equity investments – a new area for the charity. As a project professional, my interests are focused on the strategic alignment of project activity and portfolio management. Helping Kidney Research UK has been an ideal way to practise these skills. As I work in health and health-tech, I was happy to help the charity navigate its way through this new approach to achieving its charitable aims. Katherine Forbes, the charity's Director of Innovation and Enterprise, is responsible for the DAB's activity, and I work closely with her and Innovation and Development Manager, Jamie Culy.

Project skills required

Our mission is to help innovators bring treatments to market quickly and, if possible, to generate a return for Kidney Research UK, which in turn generates income for further research grants or investments. We also need to

ensure that the investment activity we undertake is consistent with Kidney Research UK's charitable objects. This has put my portfolio prioritisation skills to good use in helping the charity understand where the maximum benefit could be achieved.

Project governance is key and the DAB makes recommendations to the charity's Finance and Resources Committee for investment approval. The DAB meets formally every two months to review progress, make decisions and agree recommendations for the committee. Where there are specific questions, we might have focused discussions with the CEOs of companies in which the charity has made an investment, so stakeholder management has also been a critical skill.

Good project financial management is also vital as we need to ensure that the financial requirements of each initiative are clearly understood and analysed. This means DAB members must properly scrutinise each investment and collectively take a view on whether it would make a good addition to the investment portfolio,

so a robust business case is incredibly important. One of my contributions has been to scrutinise investment cases and to assess suitability for the charity.

A focus on clear benefits

Benefits need to be clearly articulated too. In most cases, the focus of benefits is to deliver a therapeutic outcome as quickly as possible, but the potential of a financial return is also important. Most of the innovations the DAB considers are in the field of med-tech so they are hard to bring to market in a highly regulated sector where there is sometimes resistance to change. However, things are starting to change and the DAB is helping advance some potentially game-changing innovations.

For example, one of the start-up companies the charity has invested in is making progress towards enabling real-time blood electrolyte data, which is critical for understanding how well a kidney is functioning. Having this in real time and without needing to go to a hospital would be a significant improvement for many patients, their carers and clinicians. I'm pleased that my project management skills have helped accelerate the DAB's progress and particularly supported taking a balance between risk and results.

THE TRUMAN SHOW

A QUARTER OF A CENTURY AFTER ITS RELEASE, *THE TRUMAN SHOW* STILL HAS LOTS TO SAY ABOUT OUR RELATIONSHIP TO CELEBRITY, PRIVACY… AND PROJECT MANAGEMENT, FINDS RICHARD YOUNG

Twenty-five years ago, the internet was a curio for weirdos and scientists. Only the relatively well-off had a mobile phone. And we were just about to experience the TV show *Big Brother* for the first time – the progenitor of countless fly-on-the-wall reality shows making use of newly miniaturised cameras and 24-hour TV. Enter *The Truman Show*, a film about a man whose entire life is a TV show, watched 24/7 by the whole world, which would give us a glimpse of a reality we would all experience. Always on, never really private, in thrall to the media.

The show itself is the ultimate megaproject – sweeping in scope, responsible for the biggest construction project in the world (the domed studio in which Truman Burbank, played by Jim Carrey, lives his cosy existence in the town of Seahaven), with countless teams of people to make it work. At their head is the ultimate project manager, Christof (Ed Harris): producer, director, head scriptwriter and founding genius of this phenomenal project.

Spoiler alert (and if you've not watched it, it's well worth your time): the film is about Truman's growing realisation that he's a zoo animal, a pet for the world to gawk at, and his eventual escape from the gilded cage. But this highlights perhaps the central flaw in Christof's genius project. It is quite clear that he has no idea how it's going to end.

Purpose? No, completion

There's a management principle called POSIWID, coined by legendary management scientist Stafford Beer, that every project manager (not least Christof) should have in the back of their minds "the purpose of a system is what it does". Beer argued that the de facto purpose of a system is often at odds with its official purpose, and accepting that fact was a better way of understanding its problems than the looking for "good intentions, prejudices about expectations, moral judgment or sheer ignorance of circumstances". With *The Truman Show*, the industry that's grown up around the project becomes its principal purpose. It needs to make money to pay for its incredible running costs; it needs to create drama in the life of its subject in order for its subject to be interesting.

With each year of success, we learn from the film, the project's scope expands. As a baby, Truman doesn't need to be deceived. But as time goes on, the success of the project demands his world becomes more detailed and convincing. Seahaven

The project's got infrastructure, teams, accounting. It even has a set of risk-mitigation processes. But there's no final reckoning

There's another way to look at this film as a project management allegory, however, and that's through Truman's eyes

acceptance criteria, within an agreed timescale and budget."

It is unique; it's transient (in the sense that Truman must one day die); and its objectives? To sustain itself? To enrich its producers? To keep Truman ignorant of his situation? And there are project stage-gates – we learn all about the "greatest moments" videos for sale, charting Truman's first day at school or his first kiss. But where are they leading?

There is no finishing line beyond the end of Truman's life. The project's got infrastructure, teams, accounting. It even has a well-established set of risk-mitigation processes to ensure that the project can continue even if people from the 'Free Truman' campaign break in or the equipment fails. But there's no final reckoning, no post-project review.

The accidental project manager
Christof is clearly a master project manager (or possibly a product manager, overseeing the show from conception through to decommissioning), but he's stuck in a halfway house, perhaps best described as a series of projects to manage Truman's life in a telegenic way within a broader BAU context. There's another way to look at this film as a project management allegory, however, and that's through Truman's eyes. When we talk about the 'accidental project manager', we're describing someone who uses the tools of the profession to achieve their goals. Truman fits the bill perfectly.

He demonstrates several important project management attributes. He's curious, trying to assemble a more

has to exist as a real town in the giant dome, its citizens and amenities carefully crafted to avoid arousing his suspicions.

Christof has grandiose ideas about what he's doing: "bringing hope and joy and inspiration to millions," he tells an awe-struck interviewer. However, even that isn't a clear project objective. It's never ending, of course, and the viewers we see are hooked on Truman's life, not experiencing real joy in their own world.

To paraphrase Beer, the purpose of the show is what it shows. This can't be good project management. Is *The Truman Show* business as usual (BAU) then? Well, it still seems to fit some of the definition of a project: "A unique, transient endeavour, undertaken to achieve planned objectives, which could be defined in terms of outputs, outcomes or benefits. A project is usually deemed to be a success if it achieves the objectives according to their

Whether you view *The Truman Show* **as a project success (he gets out) or failure (the show collapses), it's intriguing to look at the reasons for the show's demise. They should be familiar to most project managers.**

complete picture of his situation, framing the context for his personal project. He is also resourceful. During his escape attempts, he finds ways around problems in a dynamic way. He's iterative: test and test again to find the weakness in the system. His own stage-gates are to probe key facets of his life for veracity – and learn each time how the results can drive him towards his goal of self-knowledge.

He's also the mirror image of Christof. Where the great director isn't able to describe an end to his project, Truman can't describe the beginning. He doesn't know why he's there. But eventually the threads coalesce and he's in full project manager mode: planning, probing, a one-man agile project re-routing through obstacles to make marginal gains, whether that's leaving his wife, rejecting his fake father, overcoming his fear of water or evading the constant surveillance.

And it's all for a clear objective, a signed-off project that's the final snub to Christof. The producer can't end the Truman project, but Truman has had the ending in mind all along. It's one of

It's a compelling argument for the value that project purpose, clarity of mission and definitive goals can bring to our work

his catchphrases: "And if I don't see you, then good afternoon, good evening and goodnight!" He bows to the audience and is gone. It's a touching moment – and the reaction shots of *Truman Show* addicts around the world cheering on his departure are also a reminder that the stakeholders in a project might have a clearer idea of when it should end than the project managers themselves.

Even the studio exec understands the point at which the plug needs to be pulled and nothing Christof can say about

• **Money.** Budgets are never really enough, are they? There are plenty of CFOs who will argue that unless there's some 'make do and mend' on a project, it's probably over-resourced. But the corners we cut – or the hustles we engage in – to properly finance a project can easily derail it. Both help to reveal the truth to Truman. He notices that the same Seahaven citizens are circling in predictable patterns, presumably as a cost-cutting measure. And when his wife overzealously promotes a cocoa brand - the show has to use product placement to make money - he smells a rat. The moral? A buck (saved) here, a buck (made) there and pretty soon your project topples.

• **Technology.** The show is a tech triumph – it's implied that it's a driving force behind camera miniaturisation, for example. But glitches expose the truth to Truman - the radio in his car broadcasting the crew comms network or the spotlight falling into the road. This lesson, then, is about
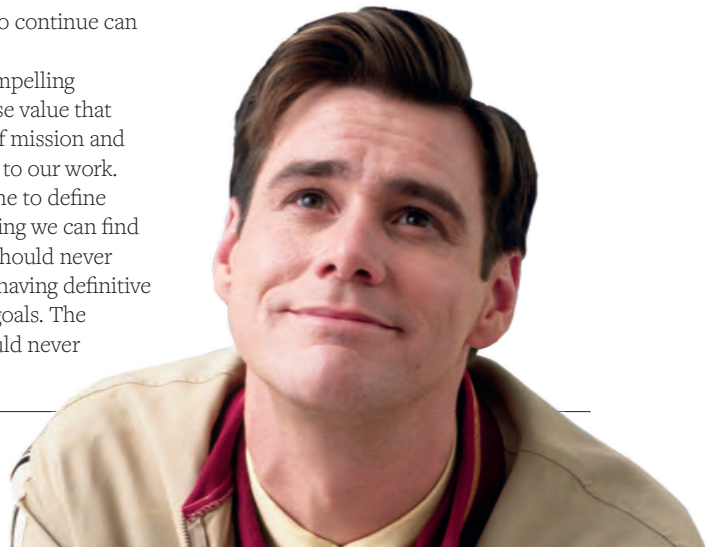
points of failure. Even the simplest tech SNAFU can cascade with catastrophic consequences.

• **Time.** *The Truman Show* has been running so long the project team eventually gets... bored? Sloppy? Key members of the cast and crew show complacency, fuelling Truman's suspicions. Long-term projects might get repetitive, but the nature of any project is that it's driving change and it has to react quickly to the unexpected. Having a team that's on the ball even when processes are repeated is vital.

• **Emotion.** Most risks can be analysed, categorised, managed and mitigated. But when emotion creeps into a project – in Truman's case, falling in love with Sylvia, an extra played by Natascha McElhone, outside the script – you get problems. Team dynamics are never easy. All you can do is stay alert - and whether you cauterise the situation (as Christof does by removing Sylvia) or find a way to make it work, emotion should never be off your radar.

the need for the project to continue can dissuade the show's star.

It all adds up to a compelling argument for the immense value that project purpose, clarity of mission and definitive goals can bring to our work. Project 'purpose' has come to define the kinds of higher meaning we can find in project. However, we should never lose sight of the value of having definitive objectives and concrete goals. The purpose of a project should never be what it does.

NEW BOOKS, RECOMMENDED FAVOURITES AND PODCASTS TO KEEP YOU ENTERTAINED

INCLUDING A CALL-TO-ARMS BY A SUSTAINABILITY ACTIVIST ON HOW YOU CAN BE PART OF THE SOLUTION, AND GREAT ADVICE ON MANAGING MULTIPLE PROJECTS

The Solutionists: How businesses can fix the future
Solitaire Townsend (Profile)

If you have become more despairing in recent years over the pathway to 1.5°C, then I urge you to stop doomscrolling climate news and read *The Solutionists*. A blend of career insights, sustainability thesis and action plan, this book is an infectious, optimistic and practical guide to becoming a leader in sustainable business.

Townsend begins by covering the basics of sustainability jargon in an easy and conversational manner. She defines key terms like 'greenwashing' and describes how to avoid this marketing pitfall with clear advice. The interweaving of statistics and facts with suggestions of practicable, innovative solutions is what makes this book stand out – it makes you think "Finally, someone doing something about it!" and inspires you to do the same.

Townsend deftly covers all three pillars of sustainability: economic, social and environmental. She argues that sustainability should be viewed as a web. Each solution to a problem must be a 'full stack': intersectional, equitable and economically viable.

To be a solutionist is to be an activist, and Townsend contends that we have the power to hold companies accountable as consumers. Millennials and Gen Z increasingly expect corporations to be an active part of the solution and not just comply with regulation. She recommends organisations engage with their competitors as an engine for transparency and progress towards long-term benefits, and encourages readers to proactively take care of the people and spaces that their firm impacts. The book is also filled with prompts for the entrepreneurial among us to solve the pressing issues in green innovation.

A truly impressive list of interviewees, Townsend's solutionists are change-makers in their industries and titans of business. These leaders attest to how implementing change included bureaucracy and pushback from investors, but that it was an essential task and – as Townsend also evidences multiple times – that there is market success to be had in the outcome. Many of the solutionists did not make their transition to sustainability-focused commerce until later in their careers, reinforcing that all generations have agency in the climate fight.

The Solutionists also discusses how to reframe sustainability from a burden to an exciting opportunity for innovation; the journey to solutions should be enjoyable, otherwise what is the point of saving the planet? The book is not only a motivating read, it also contains the tools, career advice and interpersonal frameworks for anyone aiming to join the fight to save the planet.

Review by Ashlyn O'Riordan, Project Manager, Turner & Townsend

★★★★

Managing Multiple Projects: How project managers can balance priorities, manage expectations and increase productivity
Elizabeth Harrin (Kogan Page)
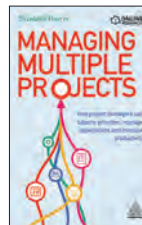
The preface sparked interest alone – Harrin's research in 2020 showed that 15% of respondents were managing more than one project, and that 35% of project managers wanted to leave their role due to their burden. Demand for project-oriented jobs will be up 33% by 2027, so what to do? Harrin goes on to explain that equipping oneself with techniques to manage multiple projects

An impressive list of interviewees, Townsend's solutionists are change-makers and titans of business

is the only way forward. There is a prerequisite – to manage multiple projects, one needs to be "comfortable with the basics of managing a project". Quite right!

She outlines 5 Ps: portfolio, plan, people, productivity and positioning. And this is where I start to rethink the book. Maybe Harrin is writing a love letter to portfolio management? The concepts are all good working practices that portfolio offices should pitch: consolidate your project schedules into a portfolio view, create clear work packages, create 45-minute meetings, schedule capacity to 80% and find out when people are available.

I take away some practical actions, like adding one day on to your 'out of office', not creating or attending back-to-back meetings and time-blocking activities. Concept 4 highlights productivity, where I was very pleased Harrin talks about learning to use tech. There are so many great applications to help you manage work: MS Tasks, MS Project, Jira, Trello, etc. We finish on Concept 5, positioning, where the importance of scaling governance and standardising documents and processes is discussed. Again, my portfolio directing heart beats! All in all, a good quick read, but I'm left wanting to change the title to *An Ode to Portfolio Management*, mainly so I can give all CEOs this book as a secret Santa!

Review by Liz Bohler, Senior Delivery Manager, MI-GSO | PCUBED

★★★★

My Bedside Books
Jerome Evans, Programme Director, PurpleSector

The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People
Stephen R Covey (Simon & Schuster)
I first read this classic around 20 years ago, and although I've read it many times since, the seven habits Covey describes still cut through pretty much everyone's conversation on high-performance teams. Especially habit number seven, 'sharpen the saw'; when things get busy, I always try to remind myself to keep sharpening.

The Power of Habit: Why we do what we do, and how to change
Charles Duhigg (Random House)
This book made me realise it doesn't matter how many books you read or how many training sessions you have with your teams: if you are not coaching yourself and your team to change their habits, project failure is almost certain. I'd recommend this book as essential reading for all project professionals. Once I understood the Cue–Routine–Reward cycle it changed my approach to team capability development forever!

How Big Things Get Done: The surprising factors behind every successful project, from home renovations to space exploration
Bent Flyvberg & Dan Gardner (Macmillan)
Cutting through the complexity of project delivery, this book paints some terrific and simple messages. I think all project professionals have a choice to make – keep repeating the same mistakes or challenge the norms and try something different. Think slow to act fast is my current favourite and I'm applying it to everything I do.

We're all ears – podcasts to listen to

APM Podcast
Our recent call-out to APM members who consider themselves introverts to contribute to *Project*'s spring 2023 issue left us knowing we'd touched a raw nerve. So urgent were the pleas for the issue to be discussed with honesty that we decided to invite more of you to contribute to a frank (and brave) discussion about what it's like to be an introvert in a profession that appears to favour the extrovert. Required listening for those of you who want to learn how to do things better.

Freakonomics Radio
Freakonomics co-author Stephen J Dubner uncovers the hidden side of everything. Why is it safer to fly in an aeroplane than drive a car? How do we decide whom to marry? Why is the media so full of bad news? Also: things you never knew you wanted to know about wolves, bananas, pollution, search engines and the quirks of human behaviour. Episode 323 on 'Why Your Projects Are Always Late – and What to Do About It' is the episode to listen to.

Manage This
A US podcast hosted by project management teachers Andy Crowe and Bill Yates whose twice-monthly podcasts cover interesting projects, particularly in the US, as well as advice from experts based there on the human side of projects. Recent interesting podcasts include episode 171, 'Raising the Palace Theater in New York's Times Square'.

Can your social project benefit from value?

EDDIE OBENG ASKS: HOW DO WE DELIVER SOCIAL PROJECTS WE WILL BE PROUD OF NOW AND IN THE FUTURE?

It's lovely and warm, the sun upon your face. The sound of the waves is soothing. How did you get here? The inception was the 'need for a break'. Project ideas were supplied by friends. Then you did the research on project inputs: the costs, the clothes. The project execution was tough. You had to take leave and your absence had an impact on your colleagues; there were problems at the airport. But the output was that you arrived safely at your hotel. And now you recline on a lounger enjoying the benefits.

Project professionals will tell you that benefits management – identifying, defining, planning and tracking – has led to you living the dream of benefits realisation as you derive the benefits of your outputs and outcomes. But is that correct? Now, as your holiday ends, you still feel exhausted. Why? Because getting to the holiday was far more hassle and effort than the relaxing release it provided.

In the 1960s, when projects were largely judged on financial terms, the US government, concerned that many projects were spending money faster than the results generated, drove the adoption of earned value management (EVM) to track spending alongside task accomplishment. According to EVM, HS2 may be on track: spending versus completed tasks. Hurrah! It may deliver outputs to cost and on time. But the project will be incomplete unless passenger train travel is central to our future digital world. Output alone is pointless without the outcome of ongoing benefit.

For a project to be legitimate it must be complete. Project lead, sponsor and stakeholders must include in the original scope all that will be needed, including setting up the processes that follow project completion. As your holiday ends, you compare the tangible (travel) and intangible (hassle) costs with the benefits of sleep, sun and cheap booze to decide the overall value, which is negative. You judge value not benefits!

Value = (tangible & intangible) benefits minus effort

In a valuable, legitimate project, benefits outweigh costs. These days, we've extended project execution from financial returns to social returns. Social projects aim to address long-standing, intractable problems that are often ill-defined or have been beneficial to one group at the expense of another. They have multiple causes and interdependencies. Unravelling them often leads to unexpected consequences. There is active pushback as the people who lose out initiate vicious fightbacks. And worse, progress can be invisible and hard to measure as the metrics of success can be vague and varying.

Unable to use money as the metric, benefits realisation is pushed to the front. As a project professional, you should be proud of contributing to such a project, but what additional skills will you need to ensure you do more good than damage?

Value = (current & future, tangible & intangible) benefits minus effort

So how do we deliver social projects we will be proud of both now and in future?

1 Wherever the inception idea arises, before it takes shape, begin with the current stakeholders. They must define both benefit and cost, tangible and intangible. There will be many communities of stakeholders. You need to typify and group them as in a marketing campaign. When a benefit/effort is identified, work with them to make it concrete. "We will have electric vehicles, which means that we will have to make places for charging points, which means that you will have to plan your journeys in advance". Make the definition and scope clear to everyone.

2 Pay attention to silent stakeholders. Use a method like a SlizedBred roleplay to guess what silent stakeholders would want.

Professor Eddie Obeng HonFAPM is an educator, TED speaker and author. You can join his masterclasses, courses and workshops on the QUBE #SuperReal campus: https://QUBE.cc

3 Consider future stakeholders. Roll into the future. Pick out things that are inevitable, like the population ageing or new people moving in, as well as things that are likely.

4 Don't cheat. Recently I heard a UK politician say: "Doing the right thing won't get you re-elected." I choked on my cup of tea. As a representative elected to represent constituents, doing the right thing will always get you re-elected, surely? But what they meant by 'right thing' was not what their constituents wanted but what they wanted. Because they knew better. These days, with the advent of persuasion science, it is so easy to cheat. Easy to persuade the stakeholders to agree to something that will damage them. Don't.

**5 Chunk up effort to accelerate benefits.** EVM was ineffective because in the 1960s projects were conceived as a long period of effort leading to an output. In our new world, big projects are broken into modules, chunked-up. Workstreams are groups of similar activities/people. Chunks are not workstreams. One of my signature projects was advising the then Abbey National on programme design for its multibillion-pound refurbishment programme. We worked out the key stakeholder communities, selected the benefits each group wanted most and chunked up the effort to deliver the benefits. By the time we'd spent a third of the money put aside we'd delivered two thirds of the benefits, so we stopped the programme and saved the remaining investment.
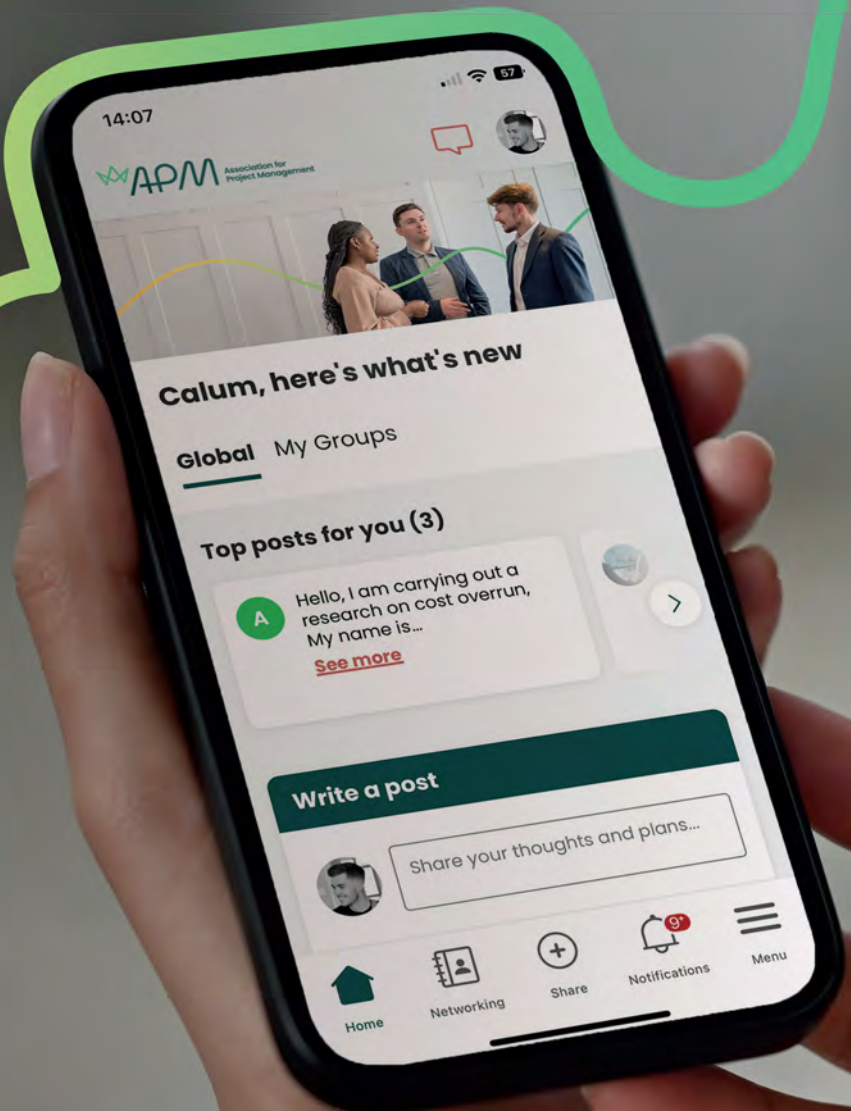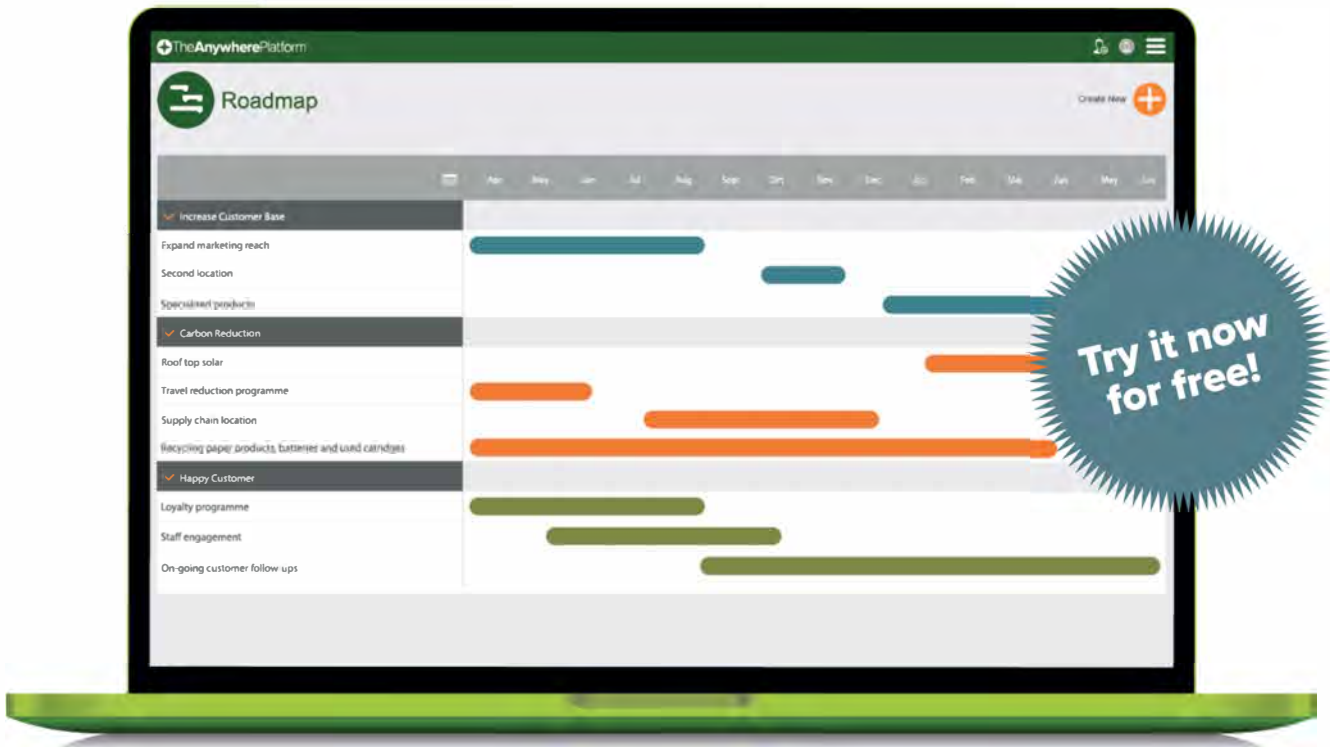
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