

ESI Horizons

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Create Lasting Project Management Processes

By Robert McGannon, PMP

Putting new processes in place requires some critical elements in your business environment. In addition, the right approach to the processes must be taken to ensure they will be used more than once or twice. Like any good project, creating processes requires that a plan for development and implementation be put in place with well-defined prerequisites and guides for use of the product. Following are some steps you can take to successfully create and implement new processes, like project management, in an organization.

Buy-in and Positive Reinforcement From Management

When implementing any process, management buy-in is the first priority. Management

will direct the efforts of the people in the organization, so the behavior exhibited by the staff in the organization will reflect the instructions given by their managers. If the processes being implemented do not align with management's business direction, the process initiative will be doomed from the start.

Getting management buy-in does not require any special magic — management simply needs to be involved in the creation of the processes. However, "stage-gates" (go/no-go decisions) are special points of focus in process development that require management time and attention.

These stage-gates need to be implemented with the appropriate frequency and

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Delivering Project Results: The Critical Role of Partnership and Integration

By Diana Lilla, M.A., PMP

Research shows that one of the top five reasons projects fail is a lack of clear and agreed-upon objectives. Sometimes after project initiation, the project manager, team and extended stakeholders realize they do not agree on project goals. Why is partnership not present at initiation, selection and planning where there is a major focus on the project objectives and commitment? Why do people sometimes think a partnership has been forged only to later discover that it was superficial and falls apart when things get difficult?

This article considers the systemic pattern of organizational life that blocks partnership and its power and how to create partnerships

for successful projects. The article includes principles from Barry Oshry's model about organizational life, *The Organization Workshop*®. The model helps project managers think about power and authority differently when striving for program and project success through partnership and integration.

Oshry's model has shaped a way to help people master performance of work in a systemic space. Since the work of projects is in that systemic space, exploring partnership through the eyes of Oshry and a few others can be useful in developing an awareness that can further one's effectiveness in the role of project sponsor, stakeholder, customer, project manager or team member.

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Partnership in Project Management

Project management is a systems approach that is a best practice in implementing change within organizational, technical and social systems. There is an implied understanding in project work that partnership is required of people at both the organizational and social system levels. In order to complete a project successfully, one needs to focus attention and actions beyond the technical system of an organization that centers on its core business competencies or products.

Oshry defines partnership as “a relationship in which we are jointly committed to the success of whatever process or project we are in.” You know you have a committed partnership when people argue about project scope, requirements or some other issue that surfaces, but still remain totally committed to the vision and end result of the project. People are partners because they are committed to advance the organization and each other through the efforts of the project. This includes being committed to move each individual ahead in what matters to them, a foundational piece for what drives meaningful results.

Peter Block, author of *Stewardship*, *The Empowered Manager* and *The Answer to How is Yes*, states that partnership means “to be connected to another in a way that the power between us is roughly balanced.” Block thinks about partnership as an alternative to patriarchy and the belief that those at the top of an organization are responsible for its success. Partnership allows for hierarchy in organizational systems with an understanding that its purpose is not one of control. Instead, hierarchy provides clarity of specialized responsibility within the whole system.

Geoff Bellman, author of *Getting Things Done When You are Not in Charge*, states that “partnering is when you and the other decide to pursue a purpose together and tap into underlying assumptions, trust,

risk, shared values and expectations.” Partnering has to do with parts — the parts we play when we work on our projects together. Bellman states a person is a “partner when they take part with others.” He sees partnerships as “implicit contracts where people play out their relationship with what we are willing to give and what we want in return.”

Partnership, according to Oshry, requires a fundamental shift from operating with predictable, reflexive conditions in an organization to intentional partnerships that enable integration and success for the whole. Designing successful whole systems within which to manage programs and projects has no room for reflexive partnerships created by predictable, disempowering organizational life. Intentional partnerships with commitment are critical.

Organizational Life Simplified

Participants in *The Organization Workshop*[®] see the mystery of organizational life unfold as they experience real life repeating itself within an organizational exercise. The predictable patterns within a complex, fast-paced environment of an organization appear with uncanny resemblance to the daily organizational life where projects are managed.

The workshop shows a simplified organizational system present in most organizations. The system is represented by people in varying psychological spaces of Tops, Middles, Bottoms and Customers (external and internal) according to Oshry's model. Any group of people pulled together in the name of a program with a portfolio of projects and customers will experience this simplified organizational model alive in their organization. Oshry's laboratory experience of more than 40 years shows that all people in organizations encounter predictable conditions in a space of being Top, Middle, Bottom or Customer (or supplier).

These predictable conditions lead to predictable responses. Together they prevent partnership and integration in a program.

Tops, Middles, Bottoms and Customers in Organizational Life

A descriptive picture can be painted about life in the spaces within an organizational system. The Bottom space is weighed down by vulnerability and invisibility as those in higher spaces constantly influence Bottoms' lives. “Group-think” easily develops. Energy is used in an us-against-them fight. There is a strong tendency to hold higher ups responsible, leaving little chance of partnership from a Bottom space.

In the Middle space, there is constancy of conflicting needs, requests, priorities and demands. What others want from people in the Middle, they do not have. They have to go to someone else to fulfill the request made of them by a Bottom, Top or Customer. Working in their world, individuals even ignore each other with no interest or time for bonding in the Middle.

In the Middle, there is a pull toward trying to fix and repair things by perceiving responsibility for others' situations. This pull keeps Middles in between others, whether they are stakeholders, sponsors or team members. In between, Middles try to satisfy all and make few happy, let alone their peers in the Middle space. A Middle either aligns upwards or downwards as a coping method, but is not independent in the Middle and partnering.

The Top space is filled with the complexity of ambiguous and unpredictable issues. Streamlining seems to be the way Tops handle the complexity that results in responsibility for parts of their system with less involvement in the whole system of the organization. Familiar polarization and turf wars can result. Living in a complex world with issues coming from every direction can be exhilarating while also tending to overwhelm the best of people. The pull of that overwhelming feeling takes Tops right out of perceived partnership with others, since they have enough to take care of on their own turf.

In the Customer space, there is frustration as commitments and

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promises made to them are regularly broken. Requirements, time lines or budgets are too frequently not met. Sometimes they receive extra frills to make up for shortfalls. Internal and external Customers shake their heads wondering why they just can't get what they were promised. In the end, being out of partnership with the internal or external provider is natural.

Anyone can be in any organizational space at any given time. (See Figure 1 above right.) Unfortunately, the spaces aren't solid ground that naturally fosters strong committed partnerships; the spaces are more like sand constantly shifting on a hillside.

What Goes Wrong

Developing committed partnerships is not reflexive or easy. The systemic organizational circumstances described above are to be expected, but now the project manager has to launch a project within these organizational and social systems. Predictable overload, neglect, vulnerability and tearing occurs. No wonder project objectives are unclear and agreements are conducted halfheartedly. No wonder the failure rate of projects is so high.

The sponsors, stakeholders and project team all have the best of intentions. Yet, the project manager is in the ultimate hard space of Middle, as well as being in the spaces of Top, Bottom and Customer. In addition, each one of the project sponsors, stakeholders and team members also experiences all of these organizational spaces.

The patterns in the organizational spaces continue throughout the life of a project. Everyone gets by as the magnetic force of organizational systems pulls each person out of partnership and into the unintentional, disempowering actions.

Fundamental Shift for Establishing Partnership

Kevin Purcell, Senior Leadership Consultant at Microsoft Corporation with their Leadership Development Center reports that more than 3,000 high-

Figure 1: Organizational Spaces

Space	Predictable Condition	Reflexive Response
Top	Overload	Suck up responsibility and away from others; become burdened.
Middle	Crunch	Slide into middle of others issues and problems; become confused and torn.
Bottom	Disregard	Hold higher-ups responsible; become oppressed.
Customer	Neglect	Stay aloof from delivery system; become the righteous customer.

©Barry Oshry, *Power and Systems*

level Microsoft managers have experienced Oshry's *The Organization Workshop*®.

Purcell states that "this work provides a shred of clarity in a sea of organizational chaos. It has provided a common language for people to see possibilities for themselves that they were blind to before. From a project management point of view, most project management happens at the program manager level at Microsoft, which is the ultimate Middle position.

"The program manager is (vertically) between those above and those below in the company, side to side between software developers and software testers and between stakeholders and customers. Program managers have benefited greatly by deepening their understanding of the Middle space. Clearly seeing themselves as Middles in the system, by experiencing Barry Oshry's work, they then understand the leadership possibilities they have in that space."

On one end of the behavioral spectrum, people reflexively operate without partnership. The other end demands a fundamental shift in thinking and behavior so people can intentionally overcome the problems associated with forfeited power and superficial partnerships. This shift requires a person to see the other people involved in the program and its projects as people in a space rather than as people. These people

are in the space of Top, Middle, Bottom and Customer with the predictable conditions of those spaces. Shifting the lens to the spatial view helps a project manager be more strategic by depersonalizing actions and words, inserting empathy and understanding for other people's worlds and maintaining focus on working together on the project outcomes. Oshry calls this "taking a stand."

To escape the messy, predictable situations of organizational life, the project manager can:

1. View, perceive and see others for who they are. He or she can listen and grasp what is important to that person and support that person's interests wherever possible to gain commitment to the project.
2. Share what is important to him or her and influence others to join in and commit to helping move the project forward.

These two activities are not effortless. A magnetic force pulls people to old, predictable responses and out of partnership. However, these two activities are the foundation and requirement for partnerships that can create successful and sustainable results.

A common issue that project managers and teams raise is their lack of formal authority or power to get the project done. When borrowing from Oshry's model, one can shift

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Upcoming events

July 1-3 International Council on Systems Engineering (INCOSE): 13th Annual International Symposium, Hyatt Regency-Crystal City, Arlington, VA. For more information visit: www.incose.org/symp2003. **Visit ESI at Booth #411.**

July 28-30 3rd Annual PMI Sydney Chapter Event – "Project Insight: Managing Projects to Realise Strategic Initiatives," The Westin Sydney, Sydney, Australia. For more information visit: www.esi-au.com.

August 19-22 Software Test Automation Conference & EXPO, The Sheraton Boston Hotel, Boston, MA. For more information visit: www.sqe.com/testautomation.

August 25-29 Quality Assurance Institute 2nd Annual e-Xtreme Conference, Aladdin Hotel, Las Vegas, NV. For more information visit: www.qaiusa.com.

August 26-28 DCI's Customer Relationship Management Conference & Exposition, Jacob K. Javits Convention Center, New York, NY. For more information visit: www.dci.com/brochure/crmny.

September 7-9 Construction Management Association's 2003 CMAA National Conference and Trade Show, Grand Hyatt Washington Center, Washington, DC. For more information visit: www.cmaanet.org.

September 8-12 2003 IEEE 11th Annual International Conference on Requirements Engineering, Embassy Suites Hotel, Monterey Bay, CA. For more information visit: <http://conferences.computer.org/RE/>.

September 15-19 GTC East 2003, Fifteenth Annual Government Technology Conference, Empire State Plaza, Albany, NY. For more information visit: www.govtech.net/events.

September 18-25 PMI Global Congress 2003 – North America, Baltimore Convention Center, Baltimore, MD. For more information visit: www.pmi.org. **Visit ESI at Booth #1011.**

Industry News and Notes . . .

updates from the project management field

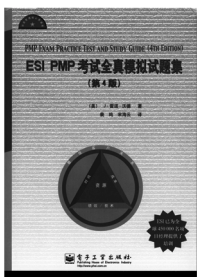
Software Firm Releases New Program Management Software

Cytergy Technology, a software developer, has introduced Thumbprint CPM™, the first Collaborative Program Management software with a learning knowledge base. This new program management software can manage standards and methods across a portfolio of projects.

Thumbprint CPM™ is built with a smart database that learns and applies project and process information instantly across programs. Its unique learning knowledge base functionality enables automatic project generation and real-time dynamic scheduling and reporting across programs.

For more information, visit www.thumbprintcpm.com.

ESI's PMP® Test Preparation Book Now Available in Mandarin



ESI International has published a Mandarin version of its *PMP® Exam Practice Test and Study Guide* (4th Edition). This translation continues ESI's penetration into the Asia/

Pacific marketplace.

The publication, written by industry expert J. LeRoy Ward, increases the chances of passing the PMP® certification exam. This study guide provides 40 multiple-choice practice questions in each of 10 knowledge areas and a composite 200-question practice test intended to simulate the PMP® exam. The guide also contains fully referenced answers keyed to the five project management process groups, a complete bibliography and a study matrix that highlights specific areas for further study.

For more information, visit www.esi-intl.com. For the Mandarin version, visit www.phei.com.cn.

IT Benchmarking Now Available From The Hackett Group

The Hackett Group has introduced a new IT Business Value Index (BVI) benchmark. The IT BVI is a streamlined measurement program that offers companies an ongoing assessment of the true business value provided by their IT organization. The BVI benchmark is designed to help companies identify and prioritize strategies to increase efficiency, enhance strategic effectiveness and improve return on IT-related expenditures.

According to the company, the average Hackett client now has a way to cut IT process execution costs by up to 27%.

For more information, visit www.thehackettgroup.com.

CFO Survey Finds 35% of Companies Have No Disaster Recovery Plans in Place

Robert Half Management Resources, a provider of senior-level accounting and financial management talent, has developed a survey studying the prevalence of disaster recovery plans. The survey, conducted by an independent research firm, found that more than one-third (36%) of chief financial officers said their firms are not prepared for a catastrophic event or other major disruption. The survey did find that 57% of respondents indicated their companies currently have a disaster recovery plan in place.

Paul McDonald, executive director of Robert Half, emphasizes the importance of current and flexible business continuity plans. McDonald added that while the New York Stock Exchange and the National Association of Securities Dealers have proposed rules that would require business continuity plans for member organizations, all firms could benefit from contingency planning.

For more information, visit www.roberthalfmr.com.

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involve the managers affected by the new processes. Too many stages will cause the managers to reject the process as being too detailed; too few will cause them to view it as lacking the appropriate controls. Involving the appropriate managers can be very tricky as managers need to have control over their functional areas, with a minimum of “interference” from others. Processes can be perceived as “shifting control” from one area or manager to another. This perception can be real or imagined but must be managed carefully if the proposed processes are to be embraced appropriately.

Once management buy-in is achieved, positive enforcement is the next critical step. Good processes which management has accepted won’t last unless these processes are incorporated into the reward and recognition system used to manage employees. The use of the new processes must become a standard by which an employee’s performance is evaluated. Otherwise, the processes will be viewed simply as “bureaucracy” and ignored.

Built-in Flexibility

A one-size-fits-all process very rarely works throughout an organization or on every project. Creating processes that are appropriately flexible increases their chance of lasting in your environment.

Examples of this flexibility include having less stringent process requirements for a small or short project, more process requirements for a medium-sized project and full process requirements for a large or complex project. Standards for evaluating size and complexity parameters should be mandatory.

The process designers also need to understand that a process cannot replace intelligence or experience. Processes should be intended to accelerate the rate at which an organization acquires intelligence and experience by creating standards. A process should be based on principles but should not supercede those principles. Appropriate

flexibility should be incorporated to allow individuals to deviate from a process. Only with this flexibility and consideration for individual circumstances will any process last in an organization.

A Maintenance Plan

It may sound like we are heading toward a bad joke but the processes need a process to maintain them! A new process set should include periodic reviews of the processes, how they have strengthened the capabilities of the organization and how they might be inhibiting progress or not serving stakeholders appropriately.

Processes that aren’t maintained will be discarded. This maintenance process needs to have a data collection element and an evaluation of when and why process deviations occur. Regularly skipping a process is a sign that it has no value or that its value is not being recognized. A performance-level person should be included in the maintenance plan team to ensure that the “user” perspective is considered in the evaluation process. This step will also promote overall buy-in from the users of those processes.

The approach to maintaining processes should be that “nothing is sacred.” Any and every process needs to be evaluated against its purpose and its ability to satisfy that purpose. Rapidly changing business environments will cause processes to be changed or added in order to remain vital to the organization.

Tools and Standard Templates

Processes should describe what is getting accomplished and why it is valuable to the business. Tools and templates allow the user to see how to satisfy the process requirement. Each deliverable described in a process should have a corresponding tool or template that shows what information is required and how it is compiled and displayed.

Samples of each tool or template should be included to guide the process user. As with the processes themselves, the tools and templates must reflect some flexibility. For

example, some document fields should remain optional, given certain circumstances, and the template instructions should explain this.

An Environment for “Appropriate Plagiarism”

There are few things more frustrating than a process that requires the user to reinvent the wheel. In conjunction with the tools and templates described above, a library of completed documents and process applications should be compiled and indexed for easy retrieval. The copying and altering of documents from past projects to apply to current endeavors will be the greatest catalyst to making processes last in your organization.

An ongoing effort to maintain this library is vital to success in lasting process implementation initiatives.

Summary

Developing and implementing project management processes can be time consuming. However, lasting processes will ensure more successful projects.

Remember that to be successful, any large-scale organizational change requires management involvement. In addition, a reward and recognition system will promote the use of the new processes and ensure their continued relevance to project work.

A process maintenance team (and process) is also necessary, with appropriate representation that is willing to change the processes as needed.

Finally, tools and templates that support the processes should be developed along with a library of effective samples to facilitate “copying from what served you well.”

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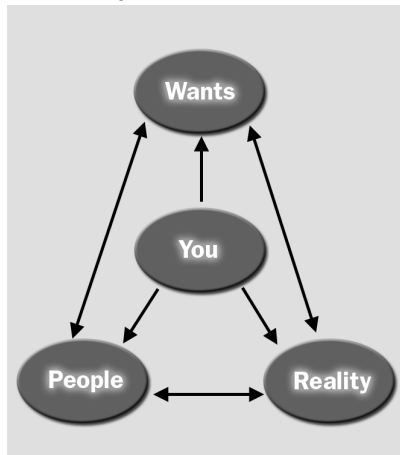
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the thoughts of authority and power away from formal, legitimate power to individuals in spaces taking stands and making powerful partnerships. The project sponsor, often at a high level of the organization, can be in a Bottom space just as much as a person who is a Bottom according to job description.

Conversely, a project manager can be a Top in the project overwhelmed by complex issues, a Middle torn between people through the project system, a Bottom vulnerable to others' desires to change scope and even a Customer when providers to the project don't deliver as promised. This customer space even translates into each person performing a task in the project's work breakdown structure (WBS) relying on another WBS task performer as a provider. Instead of living in that condition with a reflex response, a person can choose partnership and act intentionally with the other people as a committed partner.

A person who is "not in charge" can be a successful partner, according to Bellman. The project manager can take part to influence and deliver results. After all, he or she is at the center of what is required to develop partnerships. The project manager directly, or indirectly in some organizations, is responsible for delivering a future outcome (wants). The project

Figure 2: Getting Things Done Partnership Model



©Geoff Bellman, from *Getting Things Done When You are Not in Charge*

starts with a need for understanding the as-is world (reality) as seen through the eyes of those in that world who need a change. The project manager is engaging those who care about the project most, such as stakeholders — the potential partners. Then he or she facilitates the understanding and agreement of what the future can and will be. Then the project roadmap is created to take everyone from current reality to the future. The project manager is in the pivotal place of power to make or break a project by how well he or she creates partnerships from that center — partnerships with the team members, sponsor, stakeholders, end users and suppliers.

Integration Comes With Partnership

Integration is the act of removing imposing barriers and assimilating components to make something whole and complete. In other words, integrating is taking action to share information, diagnosing the issues about how the pieces do and don't fit together and ending up with solutions for an integrated whole. Project managers, inherently in the Middle, have a role as integrator in their projects vertically and across lines.

Oshry's levels of integration are:

Level 0: No integration. People functioning individually with little personal power to affect the organizational system.

Level I: Information Sharing. Information is put into a common pool of intelligence with no analysis done.

Level II: Assimilating Information. Performing system diagnosis with the pooled intelligence as the basis.

Level III: Mutual Consultation. Consulting one another as resources on problems.

Level IV: Joint Planning and Strategizing. Identifying problems that cut across the areas of responsibility and developing agreement on how these will be handled.

Level V: Power Bloc. Middles organizing themselves in a system to

bring about desired conditions for successful results.

The project system, and the whole system it serves, benefits when individuals intentionally choose to step out of the predictable reflexive responses of organizational life and instead, they choose to deliberately resolve issues of unclear project objectives and superficial agreements.

The whole system benefits from greater consistency, coordination of parts and adjustment of individual performance to the system's needs. People in the project system are better able to cope with complexity and changes during a project. Improved consistency sets the stage for organizations to grow in their markets and mature within the business cycle.

Real Examples

In a recent *The Organization Workshop*® exercise, some profound examples of what is possible were witnessed. A group of people fell right into predictable organizational life that was so familiar to them in their organizations. With strategic frameworks to help them see themselves more clearly in spaces, this group was able to empower themselves to lead from each of the spaces while conducting the projects in the exercise. One group of individuals, already integrated in the value of project management methodology, combined their newly found empowerment with project management methodology. The outcomes were satisfying deliverables from an accelerated project — deliverables created in a shorter time to everyone's amazement.

In another case, a customer who had plenty of money to pay for the company's services kept trying to knock on the company's door unsuccessfully. She could not get the attention of the company mired in the muck of the predictable conditions even though she had the power of money. Yet that company was blind to how their system was not really an open system and that it blocked

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partnership with customers for mutually beneficial transactions.

Making the Shift

Rote patterns do not change easily. Behavioral science shows us that it often takes 12 to 18 months for humans to develop lasting new behavioral patterns. Accelerated learning environments, such as those used by consultants with Oshry's model, have proved to be one of the best for adults in today's fast paced and changing environments. Consultants using Oshry's model help people to experience organizational and social system models so they can explore how to shift from rote, less productive patterns to positive leadership possibilities for themselves and create successful projects with sustainable outcomes.

Whether you are a sponsor, program leader, project manager,

team member, customer or supplier, partnership is critical. With a committed partnership, effective integration can yield greater results.

The sought-after results start when you shift at the beginning of a project from predictable responses in organizational life to developing partnerships that seek clear objectives. Then, using those partnerships, you fully commit to the project across all organizational lines and beyond the company.

Diana Lilla, MA/ABS, PMP is an international consultant, trainer and speaker specializing in project management, leadership and teams, and systems thinking. She is a licensed consultant with Barry Oshry's company, Power and Systems. Lilla has 30 years of business and applied behavioral science and is an ESI instructor. Contact Lilla at dylilla@earthlink.net.

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