

▶ What Kind of PM Are You? *By Richard Fanelli, AIA*

We all can't be the perfect project manager (PM), but we can evaluate our own strengths and weaknesses against many of the qualities of great PMs.

Rank yourself against each quality on a scale of 1 to 3, with 1 indicating "need to work at it", 2 is "Pretty good at it now, but could use a little polishing" and 3 means "This is one of my real strengths".

Organizational Skills. You create order out of chaos, know where all the important papers are at any given time and effectively prioritize your activities and time.

Technical Skills. You are an expert in your line of work and have a deep understanding of all areas of your field. You know how things work and how to get things done.

Leadership Skills. You know how to direct and motivate people, orchestrating people and processes. You see and communicate the big vision and are decisive after reviewing all critical information.

People Skills. You know how to ef-



fectively deal with all types of people. You know how the system works and you adapt your communications styles depending on whom you are talking with. You know how to say the right things at the right time to the right people to accomplish your mission.

Empathy Skills. You are adept at really hearing what is being said to you. You paraphrase the speaker's meaning so that the person really knows you heard what was said. You easily feel the others' wants and worries.

Problem Solving Skills. You evaluate all the information before jumping to decision. You think "out of the box" when necessary and create innovative solutions to problems. You are very good at "piggybacking" on others' ideas and building a consensus.

Communication Skills. You know how to get your point across with a minimum number of words using multiple media. You can (cont'd on page 2)

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Connect the Dots

You Have a Choice

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- ♦ Decrease time of effective implementation

*For more information, call
Kristin Arnold at 800.589.4733
or see
www.FacilitationBasics.com.*

▶ Making Tough Decisions *By Jim Blasingame*

There is nothing easy about being a team leader, including having to make lots of decisions that are difficult, frightening, and sometimes even professionally and financially dangerous.

In his book, "Tough Management," Chuck Martin proposes that one of the seven principles of effective management is the ability to actually force tough decisions; to cultivate a management practice that gets the toughest decisions right out front and dealt with as soon as possible.

But in his research, Martin discovered that the difference between what management thought they were doing with regard to effective decision-making, and what their subordinates felt their bosses were doing, made it look like these two groups were not watching the same ball game.

According to Martin's research, two-thirds of managers believed they were making timely decisions, dealing with tough calls quickly, and acquiring input from subordinates. But when employees were asked about their bosses' decision-making performance, only a third supported their (cont'd on page 2)

“When you make lots of decisions, make each one as quickly as possible. More of your decisions will be smaller, the individual impact of each one less consequential, and a bad decision will more likely be a lesson learned rather than a catastrophe.”

Jim Blasingame

▶ Great Project Managers (continued from page 1)

effectively address upper management as well as the rank and file.

Focus. You are not easily distracted by other issues and agendas. You constantly have the critical success factors of the project in the forefront and you focus on the project like a laser beam.

Flexibility. When Murphy’s Law goes into hyperdrive, you bend like a willow in a breeze with your skills. You are not so rigid that you can’t make adjustments in the project plan to reach the desired goal. You cheerfully meet crisis head on, knowing that there are always ways to resolve a challenge.

Conflict Resolution. You are able to effectively mediate situations and disagreements to help the parties arrive at a win-win situation.

Now score yourself:

	1	2	3
Organization			
Technical			
Leadership			
People			
Empathy			
Problem Solving			
Communication			
Focus			
Flexibility			
Conflict Resolution			
Total			

1-10 You need to work on your PM skills.

11-20 You are well on your way to being an effective PM. Smooth out the rough edges.

21-30 You are a well rounded PM with a well developed left and right brain. Work on polishing those areas that could use a little more work.

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▶ Making Tough Decisions (continued from page 1)

managers’ self-evaluation. Failure to deal with tough decisions by any team leader is unacceptable, especially when the team leader is the owner of the business!

Here are three steps Martin suggests as a way to deal with tough decisions, each followed by my [Jim’s] comments:

1. Collect and consider as much information as you can. The information comes from your experience and the research you and your team conduct, within your available resources and time constraints.

2. Make the decision and communicate it to the team. Perhaps the essence of entrepreneurship is being prepared to risk what you know for what you might learn. The most successful team leaders are able to pull the trigger on tough decisions, even if they don’t have every answer they would like or complete agreement.

3. Move on. The best way to prepare yourself to make a decision and move on is to subscribe to Blasingame’s Law of Decisions: When you make lots of decisions, make each one as quickly as possible. More of your decisions will be smaller, the individual impact of each one less consequential, and a bad decision will more likely be a lesson learned rather than a catastrophe.

So, make lots of decisions, make them as quickly as possible, and move on!

© 2005 Jim Blasingame, the “Small Business Advocate.” Jim can be found at www.jbsba.com. Kristin is a member of Jim’s “Brain Trust” and they have been known to banter about teamwork periodically during Jim’s internet workday morning between 6- 9am EST. radio show each

**Winter 2006
Vol. 11 No. 2**

A newsletter designed to facilitate discussion and share tips and techniques to help your teams to be extraordinary.

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The Extraordinary Team is a quarterly publication distributed to clients, friends and partners of Quality Process Consultants, Inc.

Articles are welcome and encouraged. We sincerely would like to know what you are doing.

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"The way a team plays as a whole determines its success. You may have the greatest bunch of individual stars in the world, but if they don't play together, the club won't be worth a dime."

Babe Ruth

What's New at QPC Inc.

Did I tell you that I was elected to serve on the National Board of the National Speakers Association (NSA)? Well, wouldn't you know, we had a strategic planning session with two facilitators to guide us through the process! What an interesting perspective—the professional facilitator (that would be me) as a participant being facilitated! Gave me a whole new perspective on how professional facilitators can be regarded....

So, here are a few golden nuggets I gleaned from the experience:

- 1) Send the objectives and goals out prior to the meeting is a must
- 2) Give the group a sense of who the facilitator(s) is, either a proper introduction or send the bio out in advance. They need to know they are in good hands.
- 3) Find a facilitator who matches and understands the culture of the group.
- 4) Check references...make sure they are steeped in how to work with a group when the collective group departs from the stated agenda.

It really wasn't as bad as it sounds, but it could have been better. And that's one of the reasons why I decided to run for this Board position—it's a learning laboratory for teams!

The other exciting news is that in December, I presented "Facilitation Techniques" at the Canadian Association of Professional Speakers (CAPS) in Ottawa - the same session I presented at the Global Speakers Summit in Singapore this past April. And I'll be going to next Global Summit in South Africa next year!

My, how time flies. 2005 went past so quickly and 2006 should be a wonderful year! Hope to see or hear from you soon...

Kristin

Team Quotes

"We cannot live only for ourselves. A thousand fibers connect us with our fellow men."

Herman Melville

"Alone we can do so little; together we can do so much."

Helen Keller

"A single arrow is easily broken, but not ten in a bundle."

Japanese proverb

"No man is wise enough by himself."

Plautus

"Fools can learn from their own experience; the wise learn from the experience of others."

Democritus

"Light is the task where many share the toil."

Homer

"None of us, including me, ever do great things. But we can all do small things, with great love, and together we can do something wonderful."

Mother Teresa

You can find a wealth of team quotes on my website at www.ExtraordinaryTeam.com. And please contribute any others you'd like to add!

Practical Team Activities: Tug of War

Tug of War

To creatively demonstrate the use of the force-field analysis "tool"

Time: 10 minutes

Nr. of Participants: 8 people or more

Materials: Long rope with red tape in middle and a pen

forces – much like a tug of war. Then let the teams pull on each side, trying to "win."

Debrief the activity:

So what happened?

Who won? (Typically, no one really wins...)

Does this happen when we try to institute a change?

What are some of the reasons for this? (It's important to understand *where* people are coming from and *why* they are pulling so hard.)

Is there a "show-stopper" in the crowd? (Sometimes, there's a legal, safety or ethical reason why we can't move forward.)

How might we be able to ensure we can

move in the new direction?

Bolster the strengths (add people, muscle, etc.).

Mitigate the restraining forces (take away people, muscle, etc.).

*Tug of War is one of the activities from Kristin's book, **Team Energizers**.*

You can find this book at www.ExtraordinaryTeam.com



“People can detect when we are being sincere—when the inside matches the outside. Ralph Waldo Emerson said, ‘What you do speaks so loud that I cannot hear what you say.’ Your deeds should match your words. You do not have to be perfect, but you do have to be perfectly yourself.”
Steven Gaffney

▶ From the Bookshelf: Honesty Works! and Facilitating the Project Lifecycle



As a professional facilitator, I found Steven Gaffney's latest book, *Honesty Works!: Real-World Solutions to Common Problems at Work and Home* (ISBN 0-9715377-2-9) to be a powerful message on communicating honestly with all the people in our lives. Steven provides clear, concise insight into many of the issues that impede clear and honest communication. More importantly, he suggests specific techniques to deal with these barriers, as well as the perceptions that get in the way. He suggests thirty-seven strategies to confront difficult situations head-on and resolving issues through open, honest communication. I have used several of his techniques with my workplace teams with extraordinary results. His own personal communication style is grounded in speaking honestly, and his writing style resonates with this value. I highly recommend this book to any one or group of people who want to improve their communications—honestly!

Okay, so the title of our second featured book, *Facilitating the Project Lifecycle: Skills and Tools to Accelerate Progress for Project Managers, Facilitators, and Six Sigma Project Teams*, is not entirely scintillating. But it's a great book, nonetheless. (ISBN0-7879-7875-2). Written by Jan Means and my good friend, Tammy Adams, this book lives up to its title. This book provides real world, practical information to establish, facilitate and model effective techniques for project teams. No, it's not a book about project management. It's about supporting project implementation through the use of “facilitated work sessions”—otherwise known as teamwork! Chock full of helpful session agendas, templates, tools and techniques (which are on a CD-ROM for subsequent use), Jan and Tammy catalogued and indexed over thirty years of their experience in an easy to use format. This is the newer and better version of the biblical “Team Handbook” for project managers, sponsors, facilitators, and team members.

▶ Connect the Dots By Kristin Arnold

I just can't leave home without my removable dots. They come in all colors, but I like to use the dark colors: blue, red, green are my favorites; yellow in a pinch.

Dots help groups identify their individual priorities. Simply give each team member the same number of dots. (I like Avery Color Coding Dots and cut strips of 7 dots for each person). If you want anonymity, use the same color; if you want to differentiate the various stakeholder groups or strength (hi, med, lo), use different colored dots. Then, ask them to place the dots on their top priorities—make sure you clarify whether they can place all their dots on one item or scatter their dots among many.

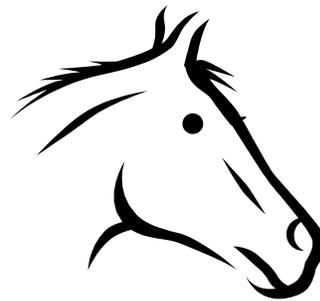
You can also create a continuum of ideas and ask the group to place their dot on the continuum.

If tension exists in the room, you may want to turn the easel around so no one can see when and where the team members place the dot.

After all have placed their dots next to their priorities ask, “So what does this tell us about your priorities?” The team will then summarize the high points as . From here, you can have a lively discussion about what to do with the top priorities.



▶ You Have a Choice By Alan Zimmerman



Avoid attacks, slurs, innuendos and wise cracks. In other words, be a horse, not a donkey.

Perhaps you remember the story of the sheep herder who observed the behavior of wild animals when wolves would approach. Wild horses, he noticed, would form a circle with their heads at the center of the circle and kick out the wolves, driving them away.

But when the wolves would attack a band of wild donkeys, they would also form a circle. They formed it with their heads out toward the wolves and ended up kicking one another.

You have a choice. You can be as smart as a wild horse or as stupid as a wild donkey.

You can kick the problem, or you can kick each other.

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