



PM CONNECT

A quarterly newsletter that brings information on modern project management methods, practices and tools to the international development community

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2. Managing Personal Time

It is common to see project managers overwhelmed by the amount of work that lands on their desk and not being able to find enough time in a day to accomplish all that work.

The moment the finalize a donor report a new request comes from the headquarters office asking data from the project or information that will take a lot of work to get it organized. But the use of simple and effective time management techniques can help in getting more done each day. It will not only help manage the time more wisely, but can also help minimize stress and improve the quality of life.

Here are some tips project managers should consider in their day to day work: Continues on page 2 →



1. Making the Right Presentations

The central purpose of any presentation, written, oral or visual, is communication; to communicate effectively, the facts must be sated in a simple, concise and interesting manner. The audience should be able to understand the purpose of the presentation. This involves knowing the audience, the occasion, and the expectations of the audience. This will be a critical determinant in what information is presented and how it is presented. Tailor the message to the audience - understand their needs, desires, knowledge level, and attitude toward the topic while being concrete, specific, practical, and relevant.

People learn and retain more information when learning is reinforced by visualization. Simple, clear, concise visual images, will lend support to the spoken words. This leaves the audience with a positive attitude toward the content of the presentation.

A good presentation is made up of four basic components:

- **The Opening.** Participants are introduced to the purpose of the presentation. It should be a brief summary or outline of the points to be covered. This helps keep your audience oriented properly within the framework of your presentation.
- **The Body.** This is where the subject matter is presented. The body should be separated into smaller, easily assimilated modules. Each module or sub-section should make a single point or convey one idea. These sub-sections should each have their Continues on page 2 →

eCourse—Fundamentals of Project Management

PM4DEV has developed a web based course on the fundamentals of project management. The course provides a quick overview of the project management cycle and the project management processes, with particular attention to the new role a project manager needs to play, as well as the skills required to successfully run a project. The course content includes the following topics:

- Introduction to Project Management
- The Project Management Cycle
- The Project Management Processes
- The Roles, Responsibilities of the Project Manager
- The Project Management Organization Structure

For more information go to our web site at <http://www.pm4dev.com/elearn/ecourses/efpm.html>

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own simple opening, body and summary.

- **The Summary.** This portion should be *very brief and simple*. It is a chance to reinforce the central theme and purpose of the presentation. The goal is to briefly emphasize the key points and main ideas of the presentation.

The Closing. The points that were raised during the question and answer session are summarized and any handout material that was not required during the presentation is distributed. This allows the audience to review the subject and assures that the ideas presented will remain fresh in their minds.



PowerPoint Slides

- When making a presentation that is using a PowerPoint Slide or other type of visual aid, do not read the text, unless people in the room do not know how to read. Repeating the text that is on the screen is just a waste of time.
- Make eye contact with all the audience and speak in a clear voice, adding more content to the ideas presented to draw the audience attention.
- On the day of the presentation, arrive and set up early. Have spare projector bulbs and extra copies of the handout material close at hand.
- Images and text should be legible for anyone; a good test is to go to the back of the room and see if the text is readable.
- Try to use large letters and 4 or 6 lines of text per slide, don't clutter the slide with graphics or use too many colors and different fonts. Use font sizes large enough to view from anywhere in the room try not to use fonts smaller than 28
- Excessive use of Clip art, sound, fonts, colors, backgrounds, transitions can be distracting and can misdirect the attention of the audience from the intended content.

...Personal Time from page 1

Plan each day. Use a Project Log or Diary, and on the first day of the week write a to-do list of all the tasks assigned to you, write next to each item the date when the task is needed. This schedule of the daily activities will help minimize conflicts and last-minute rushes.

Prioritize your tasks. Prioritizing the list of task will ensure that time and energy is spent on those tasks that are truly important to the project. Mark the list with a simple code such as "A" for most important, "B" important and "C" less important.

Work on essential tasks first. Tasks or activities that are most important to the project (marked as A) should be done first, evaluate the time and ensure you block enough time during the week to do them. See if there is enough time to do some of the tasks labeled as "B". Until all top priorities have been completed don't take on less important ones.

Delegate. Consider if those activities labeled "B" or "C" in the to-do list can either be postponed or delegated to someone else in the project.

Delete non essential tasks. Activities marked a "C" are less important, evaluate if they can either be moved to the next week, or deleted from the list.

Know when you work best. Some managers are morning people, while others work better in the afternoon. Know your most productive hours of the day and schedule the priority tasks to work during those hours.

Evaluate your progress. Every day revise the to-do-list and see how you're spending your time. Mark tasks as completed and evaluate if the to-do list of tasks need to be re-prioritized, also check for any changes on the due dates.

The 80:20 Rule

The Pareto Principle or the '80:20 Rule' says that typically 80% of effort focused on noncritical tasks generates only 20% of results. This means that the remaining 80% of results are achieved with only 20% of the effort on the critical tasks. This simple rule explains that by prioritizing and selecting approximately 20% of the task on the to-do list you can achieve 80% of your work.

3. How to Conduct Effective Project Meetings

As part of the role of the project manager is to make sure that the project is progressing as expected and that any issues are being addressed. Project meetings are one of the most common ways of doing this; here are some tips that will help making effective project meetings. All project meetings should have an agenda. The creation of the agenda can be as simple as writing it in an email and sending it to the meeting participants. On the first team meeting make sure everyone understands the agenda format. Once everyone understands the purpose and the regular flow, the standard agenda model can be reused every time.



- For a large group of people attending the meetings, it is very helpful to have a meeting facilitator; in some cases it would be preferable to have somebody outside the project who has facilitating skills. For the regular ongoing status meetings, the facilitator is usually the project manager.
- Ensure the participants know ahead of time what they need to bring to the meeting or any advance preparation that needs to take place. Make it a rule that only the people that need to be there are invited. Inviting other people not involved in the agenda topics to be discussed may distract and mitigate the effectiveness of the meeting.
- Make it a practice that the meeting should start on time, with some allowance for those that may be coming from another meeting.
- The first item on the meeting is that the project manager should explain the purpose and the expected outcome of the meeting, and make sure that to follow the agenda and watch

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4. Communication Tips

One of the biggest factors for low performance of project managers is poor communication skills. Project managers are too often are promoted for their technical accomplishments, without any assessment of their communication skills. If the project manager is not a good communicator, then he or she shouldn't be a project manager. Otherwise, the organization increases the risks to the project and increases the work that senior supervisors need to do in order fill in for this gap. Essentially, communication means transferring ideas, but communication is more than speaking, the spoken words are only 7% of communication and that body language, facial expressions, tonality, and style constitute the rest of the 93%. To be a good communicator is not difficult but requires practice and good coaching, here are some basic tips that will help any project manager improve these skills:

- 1. Listen, listen, and listen.** Spend time to learn to listen, hear what your staff and stakeholders are saying before sending any communications, listening will give opportunities for clues about what the intended audience is prepared to hear from the project. Communication is a two-way street, so it is important to listen carefully when the team members, beneficiaries or other key stakeholders are speaking
- 2. Ask questions and ask for questions** – When hearing something that it is not clear then people should ask about it. It is important that everyone understands exactly the message.. Equally important is to let a team member asks questions to clarify a point and it should be answered in a timely manner. The team member may be bringing up a crucial detail that could make or break the project's plans.
- 3. Don't delay key messages.** Make the effort to ensure that those who should know about any project changes know about it as soon as possible. Not sending the communication to the right people at the right time may result in work may not get done; or worst, work done in an area that has been cancelled.
- 4. Be consistent on your key messages.** Nothing confuses more than sending inconsistent messages about the project. If one communication tells a message that the project is on track but another tells there are delays, the project manager will be seen as not having a clue on what is

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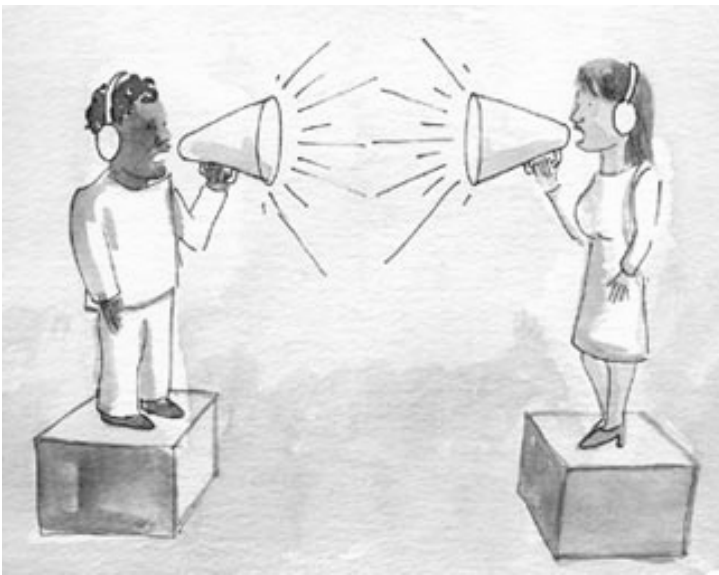
**DOING THE RIGHT PROJECTS...
... DOING THE PROJECTS RIGHT**

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going on and that deteriorates the image of the project. Revise the communication for inconsistencies before sending the to their intended audiences

5. Know your audience. It is a great mistake to assume that one message can fit all the project audiences. The project lives in an environment that is made up of people from different backgrounds and levels of understanding about the project. Even cultural differences call for a need to customize the communication. Make an effort to communicate by expressing the message from the point of view of the audience.

6. Make the message simple, concise and to the point. Nothing breaks down communications than sending long and complex messages. Long speeches or long documents filled with information that is not relevant will cause the audience to lose its focus and concentration on the message. Make sure that your message is easy to read, calls for action or informs without using a lot of explanations.



7. Pay attention to nonverbal communications. As much as 93 percent of the meaning transmitted between two people in face-to-face communication is nonverbal. Nonverbal communications include gestures, body language, facial expressions and eye contact. Project managers need to take in account their nonverbal cues when communicating verbally, ensuring a good posture, good eye contact and the right tone of voice is used that do not contradict the words that are being spoken.

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the time to make sure everything gets covered.

- A team member should be in charge of document any action items assigned during the meeting. The documents will become the meeting minutes that will be circulated to all participants after the meeting.
- The meeting minutes should recap all outstanding action items toward the end of the meeting, including who is responsible, what is expected, and when the action item is due. The meeting minutes should also recap any decisions that were made and that will be followed in the next project meeting.

Keep The Meetings Focused: To keep a focus on the meeting keep the time to discuss general status, issues, scope and risks. These are the key components to check on the overall project health and should be of interest to all team members. Allow some space for some problem solving, but making sure that the problems are of interest to most of the team members. The most common complaint in project meetings is that they take too long. Long meetings are usually caused by too much problem solving that is not relevant to all of the meeting participants. A good practice to simply stick to the time allocated to the meeting. For example, if a meeting is taking too much time and still cannot complete all the items on the agenda, then end the meeting and take any other outstanding issues offline or to a separate meeting that focuses on these items with the people that are most interested.

The points of view provides a summary of themes, that in PM4DEV's experience, have proved critical in the successful implementation of project management methodologies. It draws on the expertise of Project management professionals and provides a guide to deliver a methodology that increases the chances of project success. For more information about PM4DEV services, contact us at info@pm4dev.com

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