

# PMI Baltimore Chapter Newsletter



Baltimore Chapter  
Project Management Institute®



**WANTED!**

**An elite project team who wants to be recognized as a leader in the project management community.**

**Project of the Year Award**

## Volunteering:

The PMI Baltimore Chapter owes its success to the commitment of the approximately 200 volunteer members. These volunteers share their time and expertise in disciplines such as Communication, Marketing, Education, and Technology. Volunteer positions range from “Director” to “Team Member” on a variety of short term projects. The Chapter is exploring ways to involve more members; subsequently we are creating more volunteer positions. We believe that this will encourage more members to fit volunteering into their schedules because by “spreading the work load”, we will decrease the bandwidth of individual responsibilities. Members can earn 1 PDU for each hour of volunteer service (capped at a maximum of 45). Volunteering is also a great way to gain experience as you collaborate and network with other professionals. So please consider volunteering. Get involved! Open positions include:

- Project of the Year – Evaluation Criteria Lead
- Director & Associate Director of Sponsorships
- Director of Education Procurement
- Director of Education Statistics
- Associate Director – Marketing
- Associate Director – Newsletter

**[PMIBC Volunteer Opportunities](#)**

## January 2012 Edition

### *In This Issue:*

- PMI Baltimore Chapter Honored With Three Awards; *by Suzanne Maxa-Albers, PMP*
- The State Of The PMI Baltimore Chapter; *by Cynthia Lucas, PMP*
- So Where Is The Project Manager In Scrum; *by Tom Sheives, PhD, PMP and Yvonne Kish*
- 2011 Bishop/Kloch Scholarship Award; *by Suzanne Maxa-Albers, PMP*
- PMI and INCOSE Form Alliance; *by Suzanne Maxa-Albers, PMP*
- Upcoming Events
- Leadership Skills; *by Bob Burnett, PMP*
- Tips For Stagnant Projects and Improving Efficiency/Profitability; *by Dietmar Tietz, PhD, PMP*
- Techstat Primer; *by Rick Mastal, PMP*





## ***Tips for Stagnant Projects and Improving Efficiency/Profitability***

by Dr. Dietmar Tietz, PhD, PMP, ITIL v3



Prevention: It is more cost effective to prevent project stagnation than it is to fix it after it has occurred. To ensure that a project is stagnation-resistant, it must have a good start. The project charter should describe the project's goal, high-level requirements, and its strategic plan. It must also identify executive-level sponsors and co-sponsors (i.e. potential successors) who are committed to financial and administrative support of the project.

Important to remember is that personnel changes, even at the highest levels, are frequent. Appropriate risk management is therefore critical since missing and/or fading executive support are recurrent causes of project failure.

### ***Resistance and Strategy***

After completion of the project charter, the next logical step is to request a stakeholders' kick-off meeting; these events usually generate momentum for the project's launch, although sometimes projects do encounter significant resistance, whether it be active or passive. It could be that similar projects have repeatedly failed in the past; subsequently stakeholders have reason to believe that the

new initiative will also run out of steam. If it was not an insurmountable roadblock but rather inefficient or ineffective management that caused past problems, there is hope to get a stagnant project moving again. The strategy must be to break down the huge task into manageable smaller parts and to implement a scope, project plan, etc., as outlined in the PMBoK®. Some processes and functions, e.g., the creation of a change management review board to prevent project creep, need not to be reinvented; rather, such may be adopted from the IT Infrastructure Library (ITIL) Service Lifecycle.

### ***Tracking Progress***

With larger projects, conducting status meetings with 8 to 12 relevant staffers can serve as an effective mechanism to accurately assess a project's movement. In a rapidly changing (Agile) project environment, both daily 15-minute and weekly one-hour meetings might be required; whereas for a traditional project, weekly 60 to 90-minute meetings are adequate.

### ***Meetings, Preparation and Continuity***

To allow all attendees to prepare, status and/or progress meetings must have a well-defined agenda which is published in advance of the meeting(s). Meetings are to be concise and must adhere strictly to the agenda. It's a good practice to include "miscellaneous and future" agenda items in order to

accommodate unforeseen project situations and agenda crashers. In an effort to keep meetings on target and within scheduled time limits, the discussion of unplanned items must be brief, and minutiae are best deferred to the next meeting.

It is imperative that minutes from meetings include a list of participants and, most importantly, clearly-flagged "action items". At the beginning of each meeting, the status of action items cited in the previous meeting is to be checked, the previous minutes marked as "approved" and immediately distributed to stakeholders. It's beneficial that meetings occur at regular intervals, at the same time of the workday, and at the same location. This will ensure that the meetings become a well-established routine, enabling participants to reserve that particular time slot for weeks and months ahead, thereby avoiding schedule conflicts. Further, a consistent schedule ensures that most participants can and will attend regularly, warranting the necessary continuity. Once a critical mass of achievements exists, resistance to a project may vanish and former opponents often develop a desire to become part of the success.

### ***Exchanging Information***

Ideally, the meeting chairperson will have sufficiently diverse experience coupled with strong people skills so that she/he can bridge inevitable communication gaps between

stakeholders. A robust and effective process for the exchange of ideas is particularly important for large, multidisciplinary or cross-departmental projects.

### **Problems and Pareto**

As soon as a stagnant project is moving again, the next goal is to improve efficiency with the focus toward meeting financial and schedule targets. Insights derived from the Pareto principle may prove crucial for success; most problems are caused by only a few triggers. Addressing those can quickly generate significant improvements. Studying metrics can be helpful, but even without tools, glaring problem areas may be easily recognized.

### **Author's Observations**

I have often observed that the majority of team members were competent and interested in performing their job well. Motivation and effective communication, however, were missing. This resulted in inferior and duplicated work or tasks rendered incomplete due to roadblocks. Project staff had accumulations of work orders on their desks, had wasted time with excessive multi-tasking, and had felt desperate about ever catching up. According to Herzberg's Motivation Theory, employees cannot function well unless they have good working conditions and good relations with their supervisor(s) and coworkers. Improving the work environment, treating employees with respect, and

structuring and prioritizing tasks are measures that significantly increase work efficiency and product quality. With one particular client, I found that quality improvements reduced problem troubleshooting by 80%. With the work focus then shifted to more productive activities rather than fixing errors, projects could be completed within budget and on time, and profitability increased by 150%. These are real numbers gleaned from statistics employed specifically to measure efficiency improvements. Often times, improvements in one area expand and flow into other areas.

### **The take-away:**

It's people who make things happen!  
Education, motivation, effective collaboration and communication combined with the right tools will help bring about success.

---

*Holding PMP, ITIL v3 Foundation, and Six Sigma Green Belt certifications, Dietmar Tietz, PhD, has managed many science & technology programs and projects in commercial, governmental, and non-profit sectors. Clients include Raytheon, Hughes, National Institutes of Health, NASA, various major associations and publishers, as well as a major university. He has directed up to 40 projects concurrently, each ranging in value from \$100K to \$1.5M. Dietmar has a unique ability to coordinate large teams of people across varied disciplines, with the purpose of starting new programs and projects, setting stalled initiatives in motion, streamlining processes, and improving efficiency. He has received a Director's Award for outstanding contributions. The author may be contacted at [djt@his.com](mailto:djt@his.com).*

---

### **A Note from the Editor:**

*An editor reads content and checks it for accuracy, clarity, and conformance to applicable standards such as grammar, writing guidelines and prescribed style.*

*In matters of accuracy, we almost always defer to the author; typically, it's the other areas that create problems.*

*Words such as excel, agile, scrum, et al have morphed into nouns, verbs, comparatives, etc. Even names of businesses, e.g. "google", have crept into our daily speech. The wordsmiths seem to gobble them up and send them back at us, but grammarians haven't kept pace. Words like "agile", and others of similar ilk, can be an idea, a process, or, perhaps, software in its pre-beta stage.*

*Should the word be capitalized?*

*The editors have decided; we will capitalize those, and similar such words that have been commandeered into routine "PMI-speak".*