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**May / Jun 2005**

**Volume 13 Issue 5**

**Another Year Gone By  
By Mark Moore, PMP, President**

It's May again, and that means we've wrapped up another program year for PMI's Western Michigan Chapter. Overall, I think we've provided some great opportunities to the membership and other chapter faithful (like the Kerzner Best Practices day) and I want to thank everyone who played a part in making it happen. It isn't just your Board; it involves everyone who helps out in a dozen different ways.

As the Board met to review our strategic position and goals, I believe our chapter stands at a crossroad. We're still growing, but we're also losing people every year in far greater numbers than most of us want to see. We're financially sound, but we need to provide a clear vision for the future that leverages our position and makes the most out of our resources. We have had a stable Board and leadership, yet we will see an influx of new Board members and need to have a common vision for the future. I guess the big question in my mind at this juncture is "Who does WMPMI want to be now that we are growing up?"

In seeking to answer that question, whether in terms of a formal CMM rating or some other measurement, I know that your leadership is committed to bringing you the best. We've taken your comments and survey responses seriously regarding venue and subject matter and I know we are anxious to bring you high quality programming that provides relevant, practical knowledge you can use every day. You expect that much and I believe you deserve it.

As your President, I'm up to the challenge of leading the Board and Chapter as we press forward and grow. I know the rest of the Board is also committed to promoting what is best for the chapter. As I've talked with any number of you at dinner meetings and other events, I know you come to be enriched and to meet with fellow project professionals. Over the course of the summer, we will provide updates on our progress with the strategic plan. We'll probably even solicit some of your opinions just to make sure we are on track. As we head into the next phase of growth, I'm asking you to commit right along with your Board to make our Chapter the very best it can be.

On a final note, I want to thank all those who have served so faithfully and have chosen to move on to other roles in the Chapter. In a volunteer organization, it is the commitment of people that makes the difference and you clearly played your part.

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# Maximizing Project Success “Decisions, Decisions, Decisions”

By Paula K. Martin, CEO, Martin Training Associates



What do project managers and project teams do more than anything else? My guess is they make decisions – decisions about scope, decisions about resources, decisions about customers and stakeholders. The fact is we make decisions all day long. What route to take to work? Should I stay late and finish up a task or go home on time for a change? Who will take Sally to her soccer game? Of course these are examples of relatively minor decisions, ones we can make without really thinking. Unfortunately, we tend to make major decisions without “thinking” as well. That doesn’t mean we don’t actually think. We just aren’t conscious of the process we use to make our decisions.

Using an unconscious process is alright if you’re making a decision on your own and if that decision has minor implications. But allowing each person to use his or her own unconscious thinking process within a group setting when an important decision needs to be made just leads to conflict and chaos. You arrive at one decision; I arrive at another. We argue over who is right. Neither of us can adequately explain the process that lead to our decision, and both feel they’ve got the right answer. Now we’re in conflict.

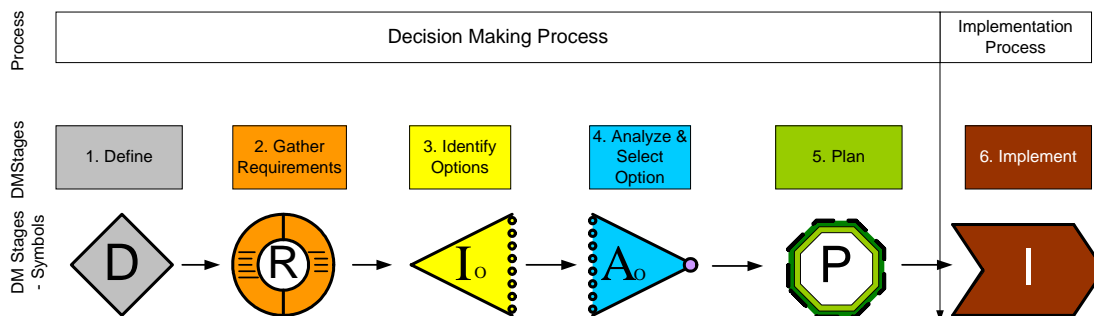
In the current era of managing collaboratively, more and more decisions are made by teams. That means the team has to reach consensus and that’s much easier to do if you follow a structured, collaborative decision making process, like the one developed by Martin Training illustrated below.

Each stage contains a set of steps that the team works through together. At the end of each stage consensus is reached before moving onto the next stage. This almost guarantees that you’ll have consensus at the point where you’ve reached a decision (after Stage 4). Along the way you will have created understanding and buy-in which helps to assure support for getting the decision implemented.

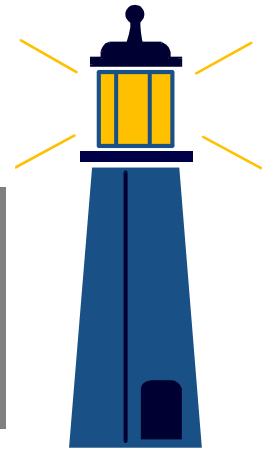
Here are the stages of the decision making process:

- ☑ **Define** – Define what decision needs to be made. Define the goal you’re trying to reach. Define the customer and stakeholders of the decision. Define the impact of the decision on the customer and stakeholders.
- ☑ **Requirements** – What are the requirements for a solution? Are there any solutions that are out of bounds?
- ☑ **Identify Options** – What are all of the possible decision options? Brainstorm the possibilities.
- ☑ **Analyze Options** – Using analysis tools, determine the best possible option based on the requirements from stage two.
- ☑ **Plan** – Create a plan for implementing the decision. If the decision has a major impact on the customer or the organization, then it’s probably a project and will require a complete project plan for implementation. It may also require selling the solution. One benefit of using a structured, visible decision making process is that you can document the steps you went through to reach your decision which helps you to communicate why this is the best option available.
- ☑ **Implement** – Implement the plan.

This may seem like a laborious process and it would be if you used it to decide whether or not to stay late at work. But it’s worth the time invested if you’re deciding which software package to roll out across a department or company. When there is anything significant at stake in a decision, then it’s worth the time to think it through carefully, with participation from the people who must implement the decision. The next time you need to have your team make a decision, pay attention to what process you use. Is it visible to everyone? Does it create consensus along the way? Can it be easily documented so others can review the group’s thinking? If so, you’re probably doing a good job at decision making already. If not, you might want to try a more visible, structured approach.



# LIGHTHOUSE



“Lighthouse” is a regular section of *OnTarget*. Its goal is to allow local members to share experiences in project management, and in the process make us all just a little more aware that what we encounter in our jobs is not necessarily unique. Lighthouse will also provide the opportunity for you to obtain points toward PMP certification each time one of your articles is published. We look forward to receiving your article for use in this section. Please see the last page of this newsletter for forwarding information. When local member project experiences are not available, national articles will be used for education.

## How to Manage Management: Lessons on Managing the Management Interface

Gary R. Heerkens, PMP, PE, Management Solutions Group, Inc.,  
and Strategic Management Group, Inc.

### Introduction

Project managers are continually “offered” direction and feedback from various members of management. Unfortunately, these encounters can sometimes be very unpleasant, difficult to deal with, or personally challenging; some may be unexpected, others unwelcome. Some may be rooted in misinformation about you or your project, and others may simply be inappropriate in nature. At the same time, however, most project managers recognize and acknowledge the need for—and the importance of—maintaining a healthy working relationship with all management stakeholders. It follows, then, that effectively managing the management interface will naturally include the ability to deal effectively with these inevitable difficult situations.

Accordingly, this paper will focus on and address two critical questions: What can project managers do to decrease the probability of encountering difficult situations?, and What can project managers do when faced with difficult situations?

We’ll begin by examining which members of the management ranks are likely to provide direction or feedback to project managers, noting that this group could include management representatives that some project managers hadn’t even considered. We’ll continue by describing and defining the nature of these encounters—in particular, what factors give rise to their existence, and what makes them so difficult to handle.

We will explore the question of why managing the management interface is vital to a project manager’s future. We will also discuss the effects of not taking the appropriate action(s) and will provide a caution *not* to be manipulative in the way they handle the management interface.

Then—in a very practical, “how to” manner—two potential solution sets will be offered. The first is a list of specific actions that project managers can take, which are aimed at **reducing the chances that these situations will occur**. These are largely suggestions on how to manage the management interface on a day-to-day basis. The second solution set offers project managers several practical tips on **how to deal with difficult and challenging situations when they do occur**. This aspect is treated as a series of suggestions aimed at conditioning the project leader to react in certain ways when confronted with certain specific, difficult situations. The objective is to help project managers learn how to act—and react—in ways that will enable them to more effectively manage the management interface.

### What Is the Management Interface?

If you are like most project managers in most organizations, it’s very likely that you will interact with many management-level stakeholders. This group is likely to be varied in nature and may include:

- the project sponsor(s)
- the client or customer’s management
- your boss

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- ☑ the functional supervisors of your team members
- ☑ other management stakeholders affected by your project
- ☑ your organization’s “upper management.”

One of the more critical aspects of managing the management interface comes in recognizing that managers often provide direction, input, and feedback in the course of doing business. This direction, input, and feedback may assume many different forms: issuing orders or making requests; sharing knowledge, information, or opinions; offering suggested courses of action (solicited **and** unsolicited); providing positive or negative reinforcement; discussing (or avoiding) sensitive issues; and other forms. Because each manager’s style is unique, it follows that you cannot—and should not—expect the approaches they use to be the same. Similarly, the nature and tone of the messages you receive will undoubtedly be very inconsistent. This is not only true from manager to manager, but may even hold true for the same manager at different times.

The way you interpret, process, and react to direction, input, and feedback will need to vary to accommodate these differences in style, approach, and message. Developing this ability to continually vary your **process of receiving** and your **style of reacting** is at the core of being capable of effectively managing the management interface. To better understand the nature of this process, it will be useful to examine in greater detail the reasons why management approaches differ.

**Different Management Approaches—Shaping Factors**

A number of factors may serve to shape a management stakeholder’s approach to providing direction, input, and feedback. Some are due to the manager’s inherent personality, and others are influenced by his environment. Naturally, the relative influence exerted by each factor will vary for different management stakeholders. These shaping factors can be placed in four major categories, as shown below.

**Organizational Factors**

- ❖ Your relative positions in the organizational hierarchy (“rank” differences)
- ❖ The way your organization is structured (functional, matrix, or projectized)
- ❖ The way project management is viewed by the organization.

**Project Factors**

- ❖ How much your project and its objectives are

valued by your organization

- ❖ How much your project and its objectives are valued by the manager
- ❖ The manager’s opinion of your approach (the chosen project solution)
- ❖ The current “condition” of your project.

**Interpersonal Factors**

- ❖ The manager’s opinion of you personally
- ❖ The manager’s confidence in your ability to perform the role of project leader
- ❖ The manager’s opinion of the way you’re handling the project
- ❖ Other factors borne from prior dealings you may have had with the manager.

**Intrapersonal Factors**

- ❖ The manager’s inherent operating or leadership style
- ❖ The manager’s personal biases or “hot buttons”
- ❖ The manager’s personal or professional goals and objectives
- ❖ The pressures of her job
- ❖ The pressures of her day.

It’s useful to note three important aspects regarding these shaping factors. First, some of them are in fact unrelated to you or your project; they are based on the manager’s personal situation, style, or preferences. Second, it’s worth noting that some of them could be influenced by **your** behavior—either proactive or reactive (strategies around appropriate behaviors will be discussed later). Finally—and most importantly—you must recognize that some of these factors could trigger negative, unpleasant, and very difficult situations.

**Facing Difficult Situations**

The situations you may encounter as part of managing the management interface could be positive or negative. However, the greatest value will be derived from examining the dynamics around the negative ones, as they will tend to be the most personally challenging to you. Also, it’s very likely that you will be judged on—and often gain the most respect from—your ability to effectively and coolly handle unpleasant, ambiguous, or sensitive situations. It’s possible that even one of these encounters could have the potential of becoming a defining moment in your future with that company. Unfortunately, they are likely to occur more often than you would prefer.

Why do difficult situations arise? The key lies in

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examining the disparity between the interpersonal operating environments encountered by you as a situational *leader* versus you as a situational *follower*. If you are like most project managers, you must learn to function within an organizational context of limited formal authority. In this environment, you quickly learn that the way you treat people is often a critical factor in your ability to influence others and ultimately to produce desired behaviors. Many management stakeholders, however, operate under a very different context. Most operate in an environment of formal authority, where *some* may become accustomed to simply “giving orders” as a way of doing business. Others may simply be the type of manager who is much more interested in *production* than *people* (Blake and Mouton 1978). In either case, the interpersonal styles exhibited by these managers will seem to suggest a lack of concern for the way others are treated (including you). Consequently, you must recognize that not all management stakeholders will consider **your** personal or interpersonal needs as carefully as you consider the needs of those whose efforts you guide as an effective situational leader. The result is that you may expect to occasionally receive direction, input, or feedback:

- ❖ When you aren't expecting it
- ❖ That is vague or ill-defined
- ❖ That you do not agree with or that you believe is in error
- ❖ That is unrealistic or unachievable
- ❖ That is obviously based upon misconception or erroneous information
- ❖ With little explanation, justification, or rationale
- ❖ Without concern for your buy-in or commitment
- ❖ Without concern for your feelings or self-esteem
- ❖ In a form that you find personally or professionally offensive.

Any one of these conditions could create a difficult and personally challenging situation for you. The way you **react** to them could be critical to the perceptions that management stakeholders develop about your overall ability, general management style, and future potential with the organization.

## Avoiding Difficult Situations

Before discussing strategies for *reacting* to difficult situations, it may be worthwhile to examine strategies for

*avoiding* them—or at least reducing the chance that they will occur. You will recall that the list of causal factors above revealed some interactions with management stakeholders are out of your control, but some can be affected by **your** actions and behavior. Therefore, one way of reducing the probability of experiencing unpleasant interactions is to take steps aimed at modifying or mitigating some of the causal factors.

Below are ten steps you can take that will have a positive influence on the way that management stakeholders provide direction, input, and feedback to you. These may best be described as **principles of action**. You should consider adopting these principles as part of your inherent style relative to interfacing with management stakeholders.

### Determine in advance from which managers you can (or should) expect to receive direction.

Effective project managers will always be certain that they are aware of all of the stakeholders on their project. This includes knowing which management stakeholders are likely to provide direction, input, or feedback. Being aware of who is in this group in advance may help you avoid the surprise and embarrassment brought on by

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 <p><b>RMC Project Management, Inc.</b></p> <p>web: <a href="http://rmcproject.com">rmcproject.com</a> phone: 952.846.4484</p> 		

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mishandling an unsolicited or unexpected critique or order.

**Familiarize yourself with each manager’s “baseline” interpersonal style.**

It is vital that you understand the full message being given to you by each manager that provides direction, input, or feedback. Obviously, different managers have different styles of interaction. The key is to learn each manager’s baseline, or “natural” interpersonal style. Once you become familiar with a manager’s natural interpersonal style, you can use the difference between that and the style he displays during a specific interaction as a gauge of the tone and intent of a situation. For example, a manager whose verbal style is normally very soft-spoken and easy-going may only raise his voice a slight amount, indicating to someone that does not know that person that he is only slightly annoyed. In reality, though, he may be quite agitated and is expressing grave concern. You are much more likely to appreciate the full impact of this manager’s message if you are familiar with his *natural* interpersonal style.

**Seek to understand each manager’s personal preferences and unique perspective.**

Try to understand each management stakeholder from the standpoint of her goals and objectives, strengths and weaknesses, preferences, biases and hot buttons, and general operating style (Gabarro and Kotter 1988). Having this knowledge can be helpful in molding **your** general style of interacting with this person. Be careful not to use this insight manipulatively, though. It should be used to avoid undesirable approaches or behaviors, not for the purpose of striking a responsive chord or playing on the manager’s emotions. In fact, many managers are able to see through that kind of pandering behavior.

**Try to empathize with each manager regarding the difficulties specific to her position.**

Try to gain an appreciation for the pressures and constraints of the manager’s position, not just relative to your project, but inherent in their job responsibilities (Gabarro and Kotter 1988). Seek to understand how this could affect her approach to giving direction. The key word here is *empathy*. Awareness of the types of pressures that some managers are under can help you to develop a more sympathetic stance when faced with an irate manager. You learn that it’s quite possible that the manager’s actions, behavior, or mood have little to do with you or your project. You should never *automatically* assume that you or your project is the root cause of every difficult situation.

**Develop and clarify a set of mutual expectations with each manager up front.**

Any good project manager knows that clarifying project expectations is fundamental to the project management process. You should always clarify each manager’s *project* expectations in advance, which may include project success criteria, project priorities (cost, schedule, functionality, and quality), and preferred status-reporting procedures. However, it is just as important to clarify the manager’s *behavioral* expectations of you. This could include items such as personal performance criteria, personal goals or objectives, preferred communication processes, limits of empowerment and decision rights, and so forth. Finally, do not underestimate the value of clarifying what **you** can and should expect from the manager.

**Keep managers informed proactively.**

This seems so obvious that it need not be mentioned. However, this activity is all too often overlooked or undervalued. The key word here is *proactively*. One useful outcome of this practice is preventing management stakeholders from being “blindsided.” Blindsiding is the term used when a manager is caught in an embarrassing situation because others (typically his peers) have critical knowledge of something that the manager should have, but he does not know this information because you failed to keep him informed. This type of embarrassing situation for a manager could lead to an undesirable situation for you.

**Don’t be too eager to follow a manager’s lead.**

This is not to say you should adopt an argumentative style. However, if you have a conviction—particularly if it is supportable by data or sound analysis—you should speak up. Though doggedly reiterating or pressing your point is not wise, tactfully presenting rational, opposing points of view for a manager’s consideration is respected in many circles. Conversely, an individual who never presents thoughtful responses or offers opinions on issues sometimes comes to be viewed as being void of independent thought.

**Exhibit a continual tone of confidence.**

Avoid the use of words like *possibly*, *maybe*, *perhaps*, and *hopefully* when communicating with management stakeholders. You are expected to be confident of the quality of the plans that you and your team have developed and are expected to be able to support the decisions you make. Any areas of uncertainty that do exist are expected to be addressed through appropriate analysis of risks and unknowns. Stated another way, you

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should always appear (and be) confident that you are pursuing the best possible course of action, given the uncertainties that exist. Exhibiting a confident personal attitude can also help bolster your image and serve to inspire your team.

### **Avoid any appearance of vacillation.**

A leader who exhibits a style or approach that continually changes direction, or who wavers on an issue according to the most recent input, will have great difficulty gaining the respect of management stakeholders. Even worse, this image is a virtual invitation for micromanagement.

### **When direction is absent or vague, set your own.**

Develop a detailed statement outlining your anticipated activities, intentions, and approaches. Seek the formal agreement, buy-in, and approval of the appropriate managers. Assume that you have the authority to pursue the course you deem necessary to get the job done (on a day-to-day basis), unless you are told specifically not to do so.

### **Reacting to Difficult Situations When They Do Occur**

Following the steps described above will certainly not eliminate the possibility that a difficult situation will occur. When one does occur, the critical issue then becomes your **style of reacting** when you are in “the heat of the moment.” Although adrenaline can sometimes take control, you may be able to counteract some of the effects by conditioning yourself to follow certain *ground rules of behavior* when reacting to difficult situations. These ground rules are presented as the ten **principles of reaction**, and are described below.

### **Don't be afraid to ask for clarification on anything you do not understand.**

You cannot make informed decisions or choose the most appropriate course of action if you do not understand the issues, facts, or decision criteria. However, you should limit your requests for clarification to those things that only managers can provide (for example, issues where their personal preference may be an important decisionmaking criterion). It is considered poor practice to ask the management stakeholder for information that you could (and should) get through other sources, particularly with respect to things you are already

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## **Regional Learning Opportunities**

**Davenport University** - Project Management Track

<http://www.davenport.edu/du/businesses/corptraining/seminars/projectmgt/default.htm>



**Virginia Tech**—Project Management Certification Courses. [www.conted.vt.edu/pmc/](http://www.conted.vt.edu/pmc/)



**Michigan Capital Area PMI Chapter**

—“The Importance of Project Management in State Government” - May 17, 2005

<http://www.pmi-mcac.org/>



**MSProject e-mail Discussions**—Contact

[tony.zink@pcubed.com](mailto:tony.zink@pcubed.com) / 734.604.0468 or [www.projectuser.com](http://www.projectuser.com)

**Western Michigan April Bonus Program**

—“Tools and Techniques for Effective Risk

Management” - Fred Brown

April 11, 2005

[www.qsiteam.com/conf.htm](http://www.qsiteam.com/conf.htm)



**Michigan Capital Area PMI Chapter**

<http://www.pmi-mcac.org/>



## IWANNA B. APMP

### “ Why I Wanted to Become a PMP”

By Cathy Luders, PE, PMP - PMI West Michigan Chapter, Sponsorship Director

I didn't want to bother with taking the PMP exam – I thought it was superfluous and honestly felt above it all. I could not have been more wrong ... but I am getting ahead of myself. Let me tell you about my career at that point. I had been a Project Manager most of my 20-year career. I started my career in the Aerospace/Defense industry. If any of you were at the March Kerzner Best Practices Professional Development Day - you would have heard him explain the history of Project Management and where it all started – Aerospace/Defense Industry. So, I began my career in the one industry that Project Management was already mature. Even before that, I got a degree as a Mechanical Engineer and in the normal Engineering curriculum there are courses titled Engineering Economics where we learned cost justification for projects and ROI's and all of the hard skills for Project Management. It never oc-

curred to me I was onto something new.

Within college I took and passed the Engineer in Training exam with the intention that I would become a Professional Engineer. I eventually got my MBA and took the PE exam and passed it on the first try. I was sort of a snob about it ... but my career took a turn and I got into IT. I had been in IT for quite a few years again interfacing with some of the only firms embracing Project Management - refer back to that Kerzner Best Practices seminar - when I came to work at Steelcase and was being pushed by my manager to get my PMP certification. I took a class at Steelcase that was given by other PMP's including my manager over a year earlier, my counterpart took that class with me and almost upon completion of the course took and passed the PMP exam. He and I have the same job at Steelcase. He is Mark A. Moore the President of our local PMI chapter here in West Michigan.

I was discussing this with a different coworker, one who has her CPA and went from Finance into IT. One that would understand my position. One that could also be a snob had she wanted to. And sometimes she wanted to. What she said to me changed my entire perspective on the certification! She said "Cathy, no one knows what a PE is in IT". She could have also said – and no one cares what a PE is in IT. Here I had been a snob about what I had done and where I had come from - but it didn't matter if know one knows what one is.

PMP is on the list of the 10 hottest IT Certifications – yes, I said IT certifications, even though it is not an IT certification. PMI is the fastest growing Professional Organization. Yes, there are other professional organizations but no other professional organization promotes Project Management. I am so interested in being with a diverse cross-functional group of Project Managers (read that as IT and non-IT) that I asked for and became the Director of Sponsorship of our West Michigan PMI Chapter. I am proud as an IT professional and an Engineering professional to have my PMP! You will be proud too! It is quite an accomplishment!



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## Western Michigan PMI Chapter Financials

PMI Western Michigan	Nov	Dec	Jan	Nov '04 - Jan '05 Combined
Financial Report	Actual	Actual	Actual	Actual
<b>Total Income</b>	\$ 810.43	\$ 530.11	\$ 2,988.39	\$ 4,328.93
<b>Total Expenses</b>	\$ 7,911.53	\$ 1,110.00	\$ 3,575.83	\$ 12,597.36
<b>Net Income</b>	\$ (7,101.10)	\$ (579.89)	\$ (587.44)	<b>\$ (8,268.43)</b>

### Financial Summary

The February and March financials are under review for final approval by the Board. Any revisions noted will be reflected in the next report. Conversely, the expenses incurred were mainly associated with the seminar costs. Expenses in October and November were associated with two board members attending the Leadership Conference in Anaheim, California. There was no developmental dinner meeting held in December.

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appreciation for the work being done by each component.

<b>Balance Sheet as of January 31, 2005</b>	
<b>Current Assets</b>	
Bank One Money Market	\$ 18,347.80
Hastings City Bank CD	\$ 5,360.42
Checking - Bank One	\$ 6,683.42
Petty Cash	\$ 50.00
<b>Total Equity</b>	<b>\$ 30,441.64</b>

### *Officer's Corner (continued)*

We have lively discussions, share ideas and coordinate activities. This coordination leads to opportunities for our members to attend other educational development days that are offered by the other Michigan PMI Components.

Our quarterly schedule calls for meetings in February, May, August and November. The Capital Area Chapter has been instrumental in providing a location that is central to most of the components. We have a great group and it is a pleasure to work with them to advance Project Management practices in Michigan.

# Officers' Corner



*Messages  
from your  
chapter  
board....*

## Chapter President Update—Mark Moore, PMP

### *Another Year Gone By*

See my article on Page 1 of this month's newsletter. I am looking forward to seeing all of you again after the Summer break. Remember we will be in a new location beginning in September. There will be new programs to learn from, new members to network with, and new opportunities to add to your project management skills.



## 2004-2005 Board Member Updates

### VP of Finance: Julie Schirm, PMP

The Chapter's 2004 taxes are being prepared by Keith Noorman, CPA with Kaptein, Dykstra & Company, P.C., and will be filed by our deadline, May 15, 2005. A reminder concerning No Show fee collections. Invoices will be sent out between now and the end of May to those who still have an outstanding No Show fee owed. Please remember to remit payment within 30 days of receiving the invoice.



It has been my pleasure to serve the Chapter again as the VP of Finance for the 2004/2005 program year. I have enjoyed participating on the Board and having the opportunity to shape the Chapter's financial future, provide strategic planning input and represent its members. I look forward to the opportunity to continue to serve the Chapter and stay involved with the Board. Have a great summer and I hope to see all of you back again for the next program year!

### VP of Administration: Chris Talsma-McLean, PMP

As of 4/18/2005, there are 555 members in PMI Western Michigan Chapter and 261 PMPs.



In order to maintain correct contact information for members, please be proactive in maintaining your membership information on-line. See the newsletter for the link to the PMI site for maintaining your membership information.

If you are not a member, or know of someone who would like more information, please send me an email with contact information. I will include all new contacts on future communications.

After three years in the role of VP Administration, I am moving on to a different role within the chapter. I would like to thank all the members and board members for support over the past years. I would strongly recommend volunteering for the board or in some capacity in the chapter as a way to enhance your skills and contacts in the organization and the PM community. In the future I will be working to coordinate people interested in volunteering with volunteer opportunities within the chapter. If you are interested in volunteering in any capacity, please let me know and I will work to get you in touch with someone on the board.

### VP of Programs: Willis Thomas

Willis has a Masters Degree in Human Resource Management with over 12 years experience in training and development. He is employed by Pfizer in Kalamazoo, MI as a Learning and Development Professional responsible for the creation of training programs in the Kalamazoo Drug Products Division. "My purpose is to assist in the continued improvement of PMP certification and continuous learning in project management." "In addition to family-oriented activities, I enjoy learning new computer software as a hobby."



I hope you enjoyed the Chapter's exciting and entertaining programs during the 2004-2005 season.

### VP of Membership: Len Todd, PMP

In the last nine months as VP of Membership, I have been watching our Chapter's membership numbers very carefully. While we grew from 519 members in May 2004 to 549 in January 2005, the recent trend is beginning

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to indicate a small but consistent loss for the first quarter of 2005. Also, it is interesting to note that during the May - January period, we had 84 new members join. Unfortunately, we also had 63 members that did not renew. Given all the other membership transactions, we have approximately a 30% “turnover rate.”



Few organizations can survive a long term 30% turnover rate. At the very least, we are not able to utilize this large number of potential volunteers and board members. The Chapter Board has recognized our membership trend as an opportunity for improvement and is taking steps to do better. As VP of Membership, I am working on a Membership Management Plan. In the Plan, I hope to capture the lessons learned and improvements that we desire to pass them on to the new VP of Membership. I am also planning to propose some future changes that would better integrate the efforts of the VPs of Membership, Marketing and Programs. Each of these VPs and the Sponsorship Director has a lasting effect on membership. For example: Once the members who do not normally attend Chapter dinner meetings begin to hear about the great presenters and topics our VP of Programs recently provided, I am sure membership will begin to recover. We just need to get the relevant information out to those members. Evidence already indicates that the word is getting around. March’s meeting was a sell out.

In the meantime, when due, please renew your chapter membership. Twice a year, please bring a guest to a chapter dinner meeting. Weekly, make it a point to talk to your peers about what we do. Daily, be proud to be a PMP. It has become expected of PMs at my company. Please consider making these goals. Last but not least, always send us your ideas. You are our best “marketers” and “idea generators”

By the way, we have an excellent lineup of speakers for future Chapter Meetings, Bonus Sessions and Professional Development Days. It is the input and support that we get from our 500+ West Michigan PMI Chapter members that makes this possible. Large groups can finance and draw the best of the best (e.g. Kerzner, Saladis, etc.) If your are due for renewal, “Just do it.”

### **VP of Education: Kathy Ober, PMP**

Congratulations to the Priority Health study group

who completed their PMP certification preparation program on April 20, 2005. We would also like to congratulate the Blue Granite study group in Kalamazoo who will be completing their program on May 17, 2005.



The Western Michigan Chapter of PMI is in the process of forming a Grand Rapids Summer study group that will sit for the examination in September. This session will be the last to use our current study program, and the PMBOK 2000. To get this class started we need a few more participants, a venue, and a facilitator. If you would like to join this group, please contact the VP of Education at [Vpeducation@westmichpmi.org](mailto:Vpeducation@westmichpmi.org).

### **Calling all Certified PMP's:**

Help advance the project management profession in western Michigan while earning professional development credits for recertification! Certified PMP's – sign up now as a volunteer instructor for our Summer study group session!

### **Calling all Volunteers:**

We are still soliciting volunteers to participate in a project to revise the Western Michigan Chapter's self-directed study program for PMP Certification, please contact the VP of Education at [Vpeducation@wmpmi.org](mailto:Vpeducation@wmpmi.org).

### **VP of Marketing: Gilann Vail-Boisvenue, PMP**

Below is an update on the three areas where I want to focus our chapter marketing efforts.



Messaging by audience segmentation. I would like the marketing team to create a plan for communicating deeper into the Western Michigan business community and determine appropriate segments where we want to market. This exploration will begin once we have a chapter strategy, as we need to know where we want to take the chapter in order to build this plan. The chapter's board members are meeting on March 12 for a working session to determine our strategy. This will provide the framework, goals and direction for the marketing team.

Building professionalism in Project Management. Again the marketing team will address how we promote the chapter in the forthcoming marketing plan. During the March 12<sup>th</sup> strategy session, the chapter board members will explore the history of the Western Michigan Chapter to see where we began, where we are

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today, and where we want to be tomorrow.

Continuous learning about what other chapters are doing and gathering "best practices" for promoting Project Management. On Saturday, December 4, 2004 the Western Michigan Board of Director's met with other local chapters in Lansing, MI. We shared leadership ideas and went through a team building exercise to learn how to increase our effectiveness as your board of directors. I only scratched the surface in learning learn what other chapters are doing to successfully market their chapter goals. As these meetings are quarterly, I plan to learn as much as possible from these sessions.

For suggestions, ideas or requests, please feel free to contact me at [gilann\\_vail-boisvenue@quixtar.com](mailto:gilann_vail-boisvenue@quixtar.com). Follow my article in the Officer's Corner and see where we go from here.

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**Web Site Director: Lori Bailey, PMP**

Just wanted to remind you all to keep an eye on the web site, because it is constantly being updated. We have used the new Dinner Reservation Form for three months now and all is running smoothly. When you use the Dinner Reservation Form, please remember that there will be two screens that you need to click a SUBMIT button on, otherwise, your reservation will not be sent. Also, all registrations or cancellations MUST be received by NOON the Friday before the event. I will be documenting a step by step procedure for the registration process, in case anyone has problems when they are using it.



I am always looking for input, so feel free to pass any ideas/comments you have to [WebDirector@westmichpmi.org](mailto:WebDirector@westmichpmi.org).

**Sponsorship Director: Cathy Luders, P.E., PMP**

Western Michigan PMI offers your company a great opportunity for direct exposure to the Western Michigan Chapter of PMI serving greater Grand Rapids, Kalamazoo, Lansing, Holland, Muskegon and Battle Creek. Your sponsorship dollars help Western Michigan PMI in our commitment to continuing the PMI education and best practices of Project Management throughout West Michigan.

We have had a great year of Sponsors!

First up - Davenport continued another year as our

Platinum Sponsor – this is a premier level sponsorship that includes sponsoring several dinner meetings. JTC sponsored our April 11, meeting and New Horizons closes up our sponsorship year by sponsoring our May 9, dinner meeting. IIL partnered with us for the Kerzner – Best Practices Development Day in March, having sponsored us during the last sponsorship year.

It is my goal to increase sponsorship in our 2005 / 2006 year. With an increased commitment of the area corporations to best Project Management practices we will be offering a Corporate Level Sponsorship. Read about that and our other sponsorship opportunities on the sponsorship page of our website.

Thank you for a great year!

**Special Events Director: Anita Hojberg, PMP**

If you would like to be part of our chapter's volunteer "call list" for special event planning activities, please forward your name and contact information to me. Also, if you have special interests or capacities you feel would be the best use of your talents and time, make sure to note that when you send your information. I continually maintain this list and use it as a primary source for contacts when volunteers are needed to assist with future events.



**Newsletter Director: Keith Lewandowski, MPM**

Beginning in May, Deirdre Horton, will be the new Newsletter Director. I wish to thank the board members and chapter members for their support in the preparation of this newsletter over the past three years. Thank you!



The Board wishes to recognize and thank the efforts of Mike Janisse of Xerox who has been so generous in contributing his time to the printing of this newsletter.

**Past-President: Nadene Delana, PMP**

The Michigan PMI Leaders will be meeting on May 21<sup>st</sup> in Lansing. The leaders from the eight PMI Components ( 5 - PMI chapters & 3 - SIGs) meet quarterly to share ideas and process information.



After attending one of these meetings, you have a new

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 expected to know.

### **Don't bluff; admit when you do not know the answer or do not have all the facts.**

Avoid the human tendency to believe that there is shame in not having all of the answers. Many of us are all too willing to use "guessing" as a way of maintaining the image of one who is knowledgeable or decisive. You should practice and learn the fine art of excusing yourself from rendering immediate judgments or making "on-the-spot" decisions. However, you should then make an exerted effort to determine the correct answer or to make the most appropriate, *supportable* decision as soon as you have the minimum necessary information.

### **Never lie.**

Anyone who knowingly engages in lying is an accident waiting to happen. Once you have been exposed as a liar, it may take a very long time before your credibility is restored to any degree.

### **Never blame anything on other people or on circumstances.**

As a project manager, you should be prepared to accept full accountability for the team and each individual on it. This includes accepting the blame as well as sharing the praise. Most management stakeholders are expected to live by this principle; they will expect you to do the same. The act of trying to shift blame to others is actually viewed as contrary to good leadership by many managers.

### **Don't promise anything that you know you cannot deliver.**

Many project managers will agree to unrealistic goals in an attempt to appear agreeable or to demonstrate that they are really "trying." Unfortunately, what will often be remembered more than your willingness to try is how consistently you were able to deliver the results you promised. As with lying, you ordinarily get a limited number of chances at this before your credibility and integrity become eroded, and you are viewed as an individual who cannot deliver.

### **Correct errors or misconceptions tactfully.**

This is really a reminder about good manners. There are gracious ways of correcting people (particularly managers); you should learn and practice them. The need for displaying tactful and appropriate behavior when correcting managers becomes considerably more

important when others are present. In some cases, you should consider postponing the "correction" until you can meet with that manager privately. This is particularly true if personal embarrassment is possible, or if the issue is relatively unimportant. Often the manager will be aware of what you have done and appreciate your discretion.

### **Immediately confirm your intention to investigate any-and-all complaints you receive.**

Semantics is important here; the only promise you have made is to **investigate** the complaint. Notice that no promise is being made to immediately **fix** the complaint. By taking this action—**and only this action**—you have acknowledged receipt of the manager's complaint. More importantly, though, you have earned yourself the time needed to sort through the issues and facts before determining the legitimacy of the complaint and the best way to address the problem, assuming there is one. In general, making an informed and defensible decision or judgment is more important than speed in these situations. Attempting to solve all problems or make all decisions on the spot will eventually lead to some reversals. If this occurs often enough, you may develop the unwelcome reputation of someone who "shoots from the hip." Even more damaging is the practice of taking action on a problem only to find out later that it was not a legitimate problem. Only too late do you discover that the problem was based on bad information or a manager's misconception.

### **Maintain emotional detachment when things heat up.**

Consciously seek to keep the flow of adrenaline under control. This becomes more difficult as the other individual becomes more and more emotional, but you must strive to keep a cool head during these times. However, if the hysteria should become directed at you personally, you must make your own judgment call with respect to how much personal abuse you are willing to accept. These situations are exceedingly rare. If it should happen to you, though, the best course of action may be simply to remove yourself from the situation.

### **Reacting to Positive (Reinforcing) Situations**

Certainly, not every interaction with management stakeholders will be unpleasant or negative. Direction, input, or feedback may very well assume a positive form, such as reward, recognition, or praise. When this happens, there are also some style issues to keep in mind, as suggested below.

### **Share praise liberally.**

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Accepting all of the credit is not only bad for your image, it's harmful to the morale of those who may have contributed to "your" success. A leader who shares praise with others is almost universally praised for doing it.

### Don't be too self-effacing.

People who tend to shun attention or become embarrassed by praise often respond by making statements such as "It was nothing, really," "I guess I (we) lucked out," or "Anyone could have done what I (we) did." Too many of these types of statements can actually lead those who are in a position to advance your career to believe you. That's probably not a perception you would like them to adopt, and in many cases will lead them to undervalue the accomplishments of you or your team.

### Summary and Conclusion

Managing the management interface is a critical project manager skill. The process is particularly challenging in situations where you are required to accept direction, input, and feedback. At times, it may manifest itself in unpleasant and/or personally challenging situations. You will often be judged by your ability to

handle these difficult situations. Being able to effectively manage the management interface could prove to be an important aspect of your development as a project manager. Mastering its nuances will serve to make your projects run smoother and to bolster your image as a rational, confident, and capable project manager.

### References

Blake, Robert R, and Mouton, Jane S. 1978. *The New Managerial Grid*. Houston, TX: Gulf Publishing Company.

Blanchard, Kenneth, et.al. 1983. *Leadership and the One Minute Manager: Increasing Effectiveness Through Situational Leadership*. William Morrow & Company.

Gabarro, John J. and Kotter, John P. 1988. *Managing Your Boss*. *Harvard Business Review (People: Managing Your Most Important Asset)*

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*Proceedings of the 30th Annual Project Management  
Institute 1999 Seminars & Symposium  
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, USA: Papers Presented  
October 10 to 16, 1999*

## Western Michigan Chapter 2004 - 2005 Meeting Program

Our upcoming meeting programs will be held on the dates specified at Duba's Restaurant on I-96 and East Beltline in Grand Rapids. Typically, dinner choices are beef, chicken or fish, and vegetarian. Consult the Chapter's website (<http://www.westmichpmi.org>) for further information. Fees are typically \$30 for members, \$40 for non-members. Call the **Reservations Hotline** at (616) 482-8305 or send email to [reservations@westmichpmi.org](mailto:reservations@westmichpmi.org) to reserve your seat today!



Thanks to our Sponsor

### "Project Managing Celebration on the Grand"

by *Mark Rezenbrink*

**May 9, 2005 @ 6:30 PM**

**Bonus Program:** 5:15 PM "Conducting a Lessons Learned Analysis or Requirements Gathering and Management" by Jeff Oxford or Bruce Armstrong Keane, Inc.

### June, July, and August

There will be no dinner meetings during Summer Break. See you again in September at our new location.

Thanks to our May Sponsor: **New Horizons**



Thanks to our April Sponsor: **JTC Unlimited**

### Meeting Cancellation Policy

If any monthly Chapter Dinner/Program Meetings must be cancelled due to weather, the Board will make that determination by noon of the day of the meeting and post a notice as soon as possible on the meeting page of our website (<http://www.westmichpmi.org>). Please make it a practice to check the website if you have any doubts about whether a meeting will be held or not. Additionally, you may either call the meeting location directly (Duba's is 616.949.1011) or check the chapter voice mail number at 616.482.8305 to see if a meeting has been cancelled.

Keith Lewandowski, Director  
***ON TARGET***  
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Articles or other contributions may be sent to the above addresses. E-mail or 3½" diskettes in Word® would be preferred. Hard copy is also acceptable.



## Is your PMI member information up-to-date?

Take a minute to visit the PMI website to find out.

- Visit the PMI Members area on the national website at <https://secure.pmi.org/memberapp/code/login.asp>
- Select "Login" on the left and enter your PMI membership number and password (there is a number on this page to call if you can't remember your password)
- Select "Update Membership" and make any necessary changes to your information
- Click on "Save Changes" when complete

The Western Michigan PMI chapter uses the information maintained by the PMI national group for our contact information. Please verify that it is up to date. THANKS!



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