

listing of what actions you have been taking on the project? I am interested in a review of what has taken place."

This type of question allows you to present Phil with latitude for responding, which usually reduces Phil's defensiveness and allows him to speak with a degree of comfort, because he is setting the direction.

As the questioner, this style of question allows you to sit back and listen for responses to your key areas of interest. You can assess how Phil is doing in the three important areas (responsibility, technical decision-making, and administrative follow-through). If he omits a discussion of one of your areas of interest, you can use a follow-up question, such as, "*Sounds good, but could you tell me a little more about how you are covering the administrative details?*" Open-ended questions help create an "expansive" tone in the conversation, allowing for more information to be volunteered by your partner.

What is the risk of using open-ended questions? You may come across as too indirect and unfocused, possibly having a hidden agenda or a concern that is not verbalized. Also, for the more concrete individual, open-ended questions may appear too nebulous. With such team members, a more precise question is likely the best way to proceed.

Tracking the message. All of us, in both professional and personal discussions, have had the frustrating experience of suddenly realizing that we are talking with our partner about four different subject areas at once and that we have no idea about how "we got off of the subject!"

This process takes place when both parties are not tracking the content or purpose of the discussion, and one or both members are inserting new topics into the discussion. This insertion occurs for a number of

reasons, which can include a lack of listening to the key message of the partner, a strong emotional feeling that takes over one of the people, or a tendency to avoid closure on one subject before moving on to a new one.

Reframing the point. At times, discussions can reach a point where communication is faltering or certain negative tones have infiltrated into the exchange between people. Unless some change takes place, the discussion is headed for failure.

In such situations, "reframing" can be a very valuable communication tool. Just as the picture framer puts a new frame around an existing painting and positively changes the sense of the painting, you can put a new "frame" around the failing discussion and create a new sense of optimism or achievement.

Every project manager can improve his or her skills in communicating with team members. Remember to consider issues of tone and texture, and practice some of these nuts and bolts techniques. Find your most effective tools. Experiment. Get feedback from others about your success in trying out new behaviors.

Observe those who communicate well. What are their approaches and tricks? Ask them to reveal their secrets. Read books that capture your interest. Take classes. Learn from others, for they can be your best teachers.

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Managing Your PM Counterpart

by Michael G. Martin, PMP



One of the biggest complaints I hear from consultants and clients alike is their frustration with trying to manage a project when both parties have identified a project manager who is responsible for managing the project for their respective organizations. The types of complaints include:

- "Each of us has separate measures of success for the project."
- "I can't get my PM counterpart to call me back or participate in our meetings."
- "We end up having two different schedules for the same activities."
- "When I was assigned to be the PM for this project, it was never clearly explained to me who was responsible for what."
- "There is no process or individual identified for escalating issues to when the two PMs can't agree."
- "The PM they've assigned to work with me on this project simply doesn't have the experience to manage a project of this size and scope."
- "I feel that my counterpart is using me as a scapegoat for their inexperience and inability to manage the project."
- "I will tell the team one thing, only to find out later that my counterpart has told them something completely different."
- "Issues that I consider to be urgent or critical to the success of the project are often not shared by my counterpart."

To say that this could be a potentially volatile situation is an understatement. Moreover, it could ultimately lead to the failure of the project.

To help avoid conflicts and uncertainties, I recommend developing what I call a Project Managers' Charter. This document is somewhat different from the Project Charter, which is typically used to communicate to the organization the responsibilities and authority of the project manager to apply organizational resources to project activities. The purpose of the Project Managers' Charter is to clearly identify how the individual project managers will interact and jointly manage the project. The Project Managers' Charter may include the following sections:

I. Project name/ID. This section identifies the name of the project and/or its ID number.

II. Managers' names/organizations. This section identifies the names of the project managers and their organizations.

III. Objectives/expectations of the project. This section defines the objectives and expectations of the project, as well as any specific objectives and expectations of each of the project managers.

IV. Roles and responsibilities. This section defines the roles and responsibilities of each of the project managers.

V. Measures of success. This section establishes specific measures of success for the project, as well as for the individual project managers.

VI. Communications plan. This plan describes how information is to be gathered and communicated to both internal and external stakeholders. It also addresses the frequency and location of meetings between the PMs to keep each other

informed of the status of their respective areas of responsibility.

VII. Issue resolution. This section defines the escalation or arbitration process for issues or conflicts that can't be resolved by the PMs.

If you're currently in a situation where you're trying to co-manage a project with a PM counterpart, try using a Project Managers' Charter to help you work together more efficiently and productively. You might be surprised by the immediate results that you'll experience simply by working together to draft the document. It could actually turn a volatile situation into a pleasurable experience very quickly.

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Employment Opportunities

Project Manager. IT field. Senior project management experience required. Knowledge of IT infrastructure analysis, information engineering, systems life cycle management, and large-scale financial systems necessary. Customer service and communication skills a plus. Salary negotiable. Hartford, CT location. Contact: Jeff Barker, American Management Systems, Inc., Jeffrey_Barker@ams.com.

Project Manager. E-commerce field. Three years IT or business project management experience required. Candidate must be proficient with MS Project, possess excellent written and oral communications skills, and have the ability to manage multiple simultaneous projects. Up to 20% travel required. Salary negotiable. Washington, D.C. location. Contact: Avi Margolis, ThinkAmerican, amargolis@thinkamerican.com.

Senior Project Manager. Construction field. Candidate must presently be working in Arizona as a residential project manager for a production homebuilder. Must be used to a 250+ unit per year workload. Salary range: \$65,000 to \$75,000 per year. Phoenix, AZ location. Contact: Randy Culp, mrindy@mrindianapolis.com.

Project Manager. Finance field. MBA or advanced degree required. At least four years experience with a major international consulting firm or premier financial institution necessary. Strong analytical and leadership skills a plus. Function experience in strategy, IT management, operational improvement, organizational effectiveness and change management required. Salary negotiable. Chicago, IL location. Contact: Kevin Moran, TMP Executive Resourcing, kevin.moran@tmp.com.

Project Manager. IT field. Five years project management experience necessary. Candidate must possess knowledge of project management methodology, strong PM skills, and experience leading results-oriented teams. Excellent communications skills desired. Experience using automated scheduling tools such as MS Project or ABT Project Workbench a plus. Salary negotiable. Grand Rapids, MI location. Contact: resumes@keane.com.

Project Manager. Electronics field. Three years CEM experience required. Knowledge of Surface Mount Technology, printed circuit board assembly, and engineering desired. Must be a creative thinker with good customer service skills. Advanced study reimbursement. Salary range: \$55,000 to \$75,000 per year. Boston, MA location. Contact: Amy Curto, Gilbert Consulting Services, Inc., 160066.6@jobfrenzy.com.