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NPD SIG TO HOLD ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING AT PMI[®] NORTH AMERICAN GLOBAL CONGRESS

MARK YOUR CALENDARS!

Mark your calendars now to attend the NPD SIG's Annual Membership Meeting on Saturday, October 18 from 1-3 PM MDT at the Colorado Convention Center in Denver, Colorado.



The Annual Membership Meeting will present a unique opportunity for project managers to network with fellow colleagues and learn about influences and changes taking place in the new product development industry.

For those who have not attended an Annual Meeting, please do not hesitate to join us even if you are new to PMI. The Annual Meeting is a good way to connect with new people and find out what we are up to as a SIG, as well as our future plans for the organization in 2009. Some of the topics that will be covered are ***the VCP initiative, product offerings such as PM Innovations and webinars***, as well as ways to increase our virtual connections

Join us in Denver this October! Hope to see you there!

RSVP to Blake Denison, blakedenison23@yahoo.com.

Upcoming Events



**PMI Washington DC Chapter
Career Day**
October 11, 2008

**PMI Global Congress North
America**
October 18-21, 2008

**PMI Risk SIG and France-Sud
Chapter to Hold Risk Management
Symposium**
November 3-5, 2008

PMI Charleston Chapter PDD
November 5, 2008

**PMI Honolulu Chapter
Professional Development
Summit**
November 6-8, 2008

Advancing the PMO Symposium
November 9-11, 2008

**“Uncovering
expectations
takes time and
requires the art of
consultative
questioning.”**

LETTER FROM THE CHAIR

by **Brian Piper, PMP - NPD SIG Chair**

NPD SIG Board and PMI Receives Feedback from its Members

The NPD SIG board wants to thank all of its members who responded to our survey. In my note in our previous newsletter, I shared some insight from PMI about the need to reshape our SIG's in order to offer better and more consistent (across SIG's) value to our membership. The primary purpose of the survey was to gather member feedback relative to how we would prefer to be organized in the new PMI Virtual Communities environment. Based on preliminary guidance documents reviewed in a session attended by all SIG leaders in July08, the NPD SIG was being considered for a merge with the Manufacturing Group. Based on your feedback, we are now better positioned to remain as a group focused on the New Product Development process across all industries. In addition to capturing this feedback, we also solicited open comments on our current SIG as well as what are the most important values of our group. We had a wide variety of comments in this open question format. As your Board, we will consider these comments and determine how to improve our community.

On a related note, I have seen some of the preliminary work on the websites being created for use by all SIGs in the new Virtual Communities environment and I am very encouraged by the improved value we will all be able to take advantage of.

The feedback we received on the survey will provide valuable guidance to PMI and the NPD SIG as we look to further provide the membership with value added new product development content and information sharing tools. The NPD SIG relies on its members to take an active role in shaping the future of this component. The majority of the members who responded to the survey believe that our newsletter and webinars provide the best value. In addition, the members surveyed believe that the NPD SIG should provide more frequent communication to its members through blogs, collaboration portals, new product development links, cases studies, and best practices.

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OH NO! YOU GAVE ME WHAT I ASKED FOR

PART II: USING CONSULTING SKILLS TO UNCOVER EXPECTATIONS

by Elizabeth Larson, CBAP, PMP, and Richard Larson, CBAP, PMP - Principals,
Watermark Learning, Inc.

In this issue, we are including the final parts of this three-part series.

Part II: *Using Consulting Skills to Uncover Expectations.*

Part III: *Analyzing Problems and Recommending Solutions that Address Expectations.*

Read Part I: *Common Pitfalls to Uncovering Expectations*, in the 2nd Quarter issue of *PM Innovations* available on pminpdsig.org.

Overcoming the many pitfalls described in Part 1 of this series requires a consultative approach. Why is that? Being a consultant to the business helps ensure that expectations are met. The background of a situation is assessed by understanding the business problem, analyzing the current state, understanding the limitations, and gathering supporting statistics detailing the exact impact of the current situation. The project professional is then in an excellent position to recommend a solution that will solve the business problem at hand. Effective consultants have learned that the key the key to success includes:

- 1) Asking questions to uncover problems and synthesizing the responses
- 2) Analyzing those problems
- 3) Advising clients by recommending solutions.

This article explores step 1 and focuses on consultative questioning. Part 3 of this series will conclude with steps 2 and 3 of the process, and will focus on analysis and recommendations.

Step 1) Asking Questions that Uncover Problems and Synthesizing the Responses

Asking the Right Questions

Asking the right requirements questions can be challenging, because we need the right context for asking good questions. Being a consultant requires asking questions to obtain the right perspective, before trying to understand the details of the end product. Once we have the context, we can then move on to questions related to our product.

A few good consultative questions to ask, regardless of the product or service of the project, always include the business context with such questions as:

1. What business problems are being solved with the project?
2. What opportunities is the organization taking advantage of?
3. What are the external threats that this project addresses?
4. How does the project take advantage of the organization's strengths or compensate for its weaknesses?
5. What is the product description and project vision?
6. How does this project link to the organization's strategic direction?
7. How will this product be perceived in this organization?

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OH NO! YOU GAVE ME WHAT I ASKED FOR CONT.

A few good questions for understanding the project context can include such things as:

1. How much are you willing to spend on this project?
2. What is the priority of this project in relation to the other projects in this portfolio/program/organization/division?
3. What are your time constraints and what causes them?
4. What risks do you see with this project?
5. Who/who else should we talk to?
6. Who are the subject matter experts and what experience do they have?
7. If you had to choose among time and cost, scope, and quality which is the most important to you? Least?

Some good questions for learning high-level product requirements includes such things as:

1. To what extent will this new product cause business process to change? Which ones will change and in what way?
2. What do people need to know in order to use this product?
3. How will internal and external customers use the product
4. How will the product be sold? Maintained? Supported?
5. What impacts to other areas are you aware of?
6. How stable are the product requirements?
7. Tell me about the best/worst product feature you've encountered?
Easiest/hardest product to use that you've had to use?

Tip: avoid questions related to detailed features and functions until the business, project, and product context are clearly understood and documented.

Synthesizing Responses

Synthesizing responses uses active listening skills to take a great deal of disparate information and organize it in a way that is useful to the appropriate stakeholders. It starts with active listening, which involves ensuring that what is said by the speaker is actually heard correctly and completely by the listener. The listener needs to ask clarifying questions and paraphrase what is thought be heard. Asking good and relevant questions builds confidence by the speaker that there are no assumptions or misconceptions on the part of the listener.

To effectively synthesize information, critical thinking skills are needed along with the ability to:

- Process large amounts of information. Similar past experience can be useful, but care should be taken to avoid making assumptions based on past project experiences.
- Organize, discriminate, and discern disparate pieces of information, putting them together in concise and useful ways.
- Distinguish between what's important from what is not, and discarding the unimportant. Experience is invaluable in making this determination. Analysis tools can also be extremely helpful. For example, Pareto analysis is a helpful technique for determining the major factors causing a business problem. It uncovers the critical 20% of causes that lead to 80% of the results.

Traceability and Creating Structure from Chaos

A useful tool in synthesizing a large amount of information is the traceability matrix, which is a table for recording requirements. The structure of this table is hierarchical, so that high-level requirements can be documented in the beginning of the project and details can be added as more is learned. In addition, requirements attributes, such as a unique identifier, textual description, requirements source, rationale, priority and many more can help categorize requirements as they surface.

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OH NO! YOU GAVE ME WHAT I ASKED FOR CONT.

Although there are many techniques for creating structure from chaos, traceability provides the most effective way to organize large amounts of disparate pieces of information, ultimately helping to ensure that every requirement adds value, that what was approved is actually implemented, and that changes are controlled. It does so by providing a structure that allows requirements to be linked to business and project objectives, business problems, and deliverables.

Traceability also helps ensure that the product can be built, tested and verified after implementation. Finally, logical groupings of the table help manage changes more easily.

Tip: Use traceability to help ensure that each requirement is linked with project deliverables, project objectives, business problems, and business objectives, preventing rogue requirements from sneaking into the project.

Summary

Uncovering expectations takes time and requires the art of consultative questioning. In this article, we focused on tips for effective questioning. We presented several ideas and examples of asking the right questions, regardless of the product or service of the project. We stressed the importance of synthesizing the information obtained to make it relevant. We also showed how a traceability matrix can be a useful tool for synthesizing sizable amounts of information like requirements. Part 3 of this series will conclude with the remaining steps of the consulting process, and will focus on analysis and recommendations.

NPD SIG WEBINAR **"BETTER REQUIREMENTS** **DEVELOPMENT AND** **MANAGEMENT"**

Date: November 2008

Time: TBD

The date and time of this webinar will be announced at a later date.

**Speaker: Tom Sheives, PhD, PMP
from Better Project Results Inc**

The URL and phone number will be emailed later directly to members.

Abstract

Most product development projects fail because of the lack of good, clearly defined, well understood requirements. This talk presents a simple framework using techniques from the IEEE and SEI for gathering, eliciting, documenting, analyzing, and controlling changes to requirements. The framework and references provided would give the participant an understanding of how to reduce cycle times for development, reduce cost, improve quality, and improve team collaboration.

Bio

Tom Sheives is an international consultant, coach, trainer, and speaker focused on making people and project teams more successful. He trained in 2007, 170 project managers and executives in the Panama Canal Authority as they prepare for the new \$5.25 Billion expansion program, voted this year as the "Most Significant Construction Project in World". He is a corporate coach with clients from Microsoft, Lockheed Martin, and other small and large companies. He has helped companies such as Texas Instruments and Alliance Data Systems improve significantly their project management processes and requirements process. Tom is a licensee of the Winslow Personality Assessment that every project manager and business analysis should take.

OH NO! YOU GAVE ME WHAT I ASKED FOR

PART III: ANALYZING PROBLEMS AND RECOMMENDING SOLUTIONS THAT ADDRESS EXPECTATIONS

by Elizabeth Larson, CBAP, PMP, and Richard Larson, CBAP, PMP - Principals, Watermark Learning, Inc.

As presented in Parts 1 and 2 of this article, project professionals realize that projects fail when customer requirements are not clearly defined and customer expectations are not met. The consultative questioning presented in the prior article is essential to understanding the business problem and its limitations. The project manager or business analyst can then analyze root causes of the problem or opportunity, and will be able to recommend a solution to solve the business problem at hand. If the recommendation is accepted, we can then recommend the most effective implementation approach. The major steps involved in the consultative approach are listed here:|

- 1) Asking questions to uncover problems and synthesizing the responses
- 2) Analyzing those problems
- 3) Advising clients by recommending solutions.

This article explores steps 2 and 3 and focuses on analysis and recommendations.

Step 2) Analyzing Problems

Once we have asked business, project, and product context questions, we should have an understanding of the business problem we're trying to solve, as well as an idea of the project's product or service that will result from successfully implementing the project. Before we can recommend a solution, however, we must analyze the problem, which requires the ability to break the large problem into smaller pieces and to get to its root cause.

Using Models And Prototypes to Analyze Problems and Verify Expectations

To understand the business problem, we need to understand the current situation and the limitations of the current situation. Models present a clear way to learn about and document the situation, known as the current state or "as-is." Once we understand what is happening today, we can analyze how to improve the situation and recommend a better approach. Modeling provides the structure to ask the right questions at the right time during the project. We call those "question points" and they are valuable because the modeling technique prompts them. By graphically displaying the issues, we can more easily see the "gaps" between what is happening today and what is needed in the future. Models, then, provide a basis for solid recommendations.

Tip Modeling provides the structure to ask the right questions at the right time during the project, and provides a basis for solid recommendations.

Modeling also provides the means to ask questions that might well be forgotten, since the models' structure forces thoroughness in questioning. Modeling also provides a way for business analysts to translate their interpretation of the requirements to both the business clients and the technical team. There are a variety of models that can be used during the capturing of requirements. Below is an example of the kinds of models used in software development. Some of these, such as business process models and prototypes are useful in any project where the output is a tangible product, such as a new car, service, or process.

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OH NO! YOU GAVE ME WHAT I ASKED FOR CONT.

At the bottom of this page is a table of requirements models used in software development.

Step 3) Advising Clients by Recommending Solutions

The Recommendation

In addition to the more obvious recommendation structure (summary, body, attachments), the recommendation should carry the right tone for the intended audience. The tone can be formal or informal, folksy or precise, direct, or subtle. It's important that the tone will not distract its intended audience. Having the wrong tone and level of formality can distract the audience, break trust, and ultimately lead to the rejection of the recommendation and loss in credibility of the author.

In addition, the recommendation should include input from those who will be affected by its implementation, which means that the recommendation has a far greater chance of acceptance if it is reviewed by key stakeholders and if their input is included in the final draft. The more stakeholder input is sought, the more likely that supporters will defend it against saboteurs. Ideally these stakeholder champions will also participate in presenting the recommendation, which will provide credibility to the recommendation.

Presenting the Recommendation

Presenting the recommendation can be done formally or informally, in written or verbal format. No matter which format or venue is chosen, the structure of the presentation is important. Having a summary and details, for example, works in every venue. Even the most informal setting requires giving a great deal of thought to planning the presentation approach, including such things as choosing the right venue, how much in advance of the meeting to distribute it, roles and responsibilities during the presentation, the agenda, ground rules, when to take questions, and more.

Finally, the consulting approach requires presenting a recommendation that best serves the organization, even if the recommended solution differs from what was initially presented by the stakeholders. Those listening to the recommendation do not need to be completely in support of the proposal, but they will more likely accept it if the project manager is thoroughly prepared and the recommendation crafted with care.

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Model	Benefit of use	Main Use	Can be Used for Non-Software Components
Business process	Change management. How will use of the product cause business processes to change.	Document the current "as-is" and future "to-be" business processes, identify gaps, determine ways to get to "to-be." Use as a basis for other models to assess impacts.	Yes
Data model	Provides structure for getting information requirements.	Gather the information required to support the proposed process. Requires understanding the business rules enforced by data, and planning how to convert from the current to the future state.	No
Use case model	Defines how the new product (system) will work.	Documents interactions between the end-user and the system. Shows the interactions of other systems and time triggers to the system.	Yes
Prototype	Can be used to document navigation, design, usability, errors and messages, look and feel of the end product without investing the time and resources needed for full product development.	Prototypes are mockups that can be "paper and pencil" or mockups using technology, but without full functionality. Prototypes provide the ability to see and use a model of the product before full implementation.	Yes

Requirements Model Usage

OH NO! YOU GAVE ME WHAT I ASKED FOR CONT.

That means ensuring that the recommendation addresses the business need identified and analyzed, that the recommended solution addresses that need, and that impacts of the solution to all areas in the organization have been taken into account. Remember, project managers and business analysts do not need to make the decision to accept the recommendation. That's for the sponsor and executives. However, project professionals do have an obligation to be consultants to the business by having a clear understanding of the problem, and developing a thorough recommendation for a solution that's the right thing for the organization.

Tip Be courageous. While we want to keep the audience in mind, we need to present what we think is the right thing for the organization, even if we perceive that our audience is not receptive. By doing our homework, analyzing impacts and alternatives, we can present with confidence.

In addition to your main recommendation, be prepared with alternatives and some analysis of why they were not your proposal.

Summary

In this series, we explored how to uncover client expectations and why this is so important to delivering the right product. Uncovering expectations takes time and requires the art of consultative questioning. It demands patience with clients who have difficulty articulating their requirements. Uncovering expectations takes a commitment to defining requirements in sufficient detail to understand what those expectations truly are. It requires a process for eliciting the requirements, and also for analyzing, documenting, and validating them. Finally, the consultative approach we presented acknowledges that the expectations we uncover may require recommendations for shifting the business to adopt and embrace them.

About the Authors

Elizabeth Larson, CBAP, PMP and Richard Larson, CBAP, PMP are Co-Principals of Watermark Learning (www.watermarklearning.com), a globally recognized business analysis and project management training company. Each has presented numerous workshops, seminars, and training classes to thousands of participants on 3 different continents. They regularly speak on business analysis and project management topics at Business Analyst World conferences and Project Management Institute (PMI) Global Congresses. Elizabeth and Richard are frequent contributors of articles to international trade publications such as CIO; ComputerWorld; BA Times; PMI PM-Network Magazine; the University of Houston book, IT Project Management Readings; Certification Magazine, ICFAI Professional Reference Book – Project Management-Emerging Perspectives; and many others. Elizabeth and Richard are also contributing to the Fourth Edition of the PMBOK in a section on collecting requirements.

A CALL FOR LEADERS

If you have interest in a volunteer leadership position associated with the NPD SIG Board, either in a Board position or in another area of interest such as surveys, webinars, finance, membership, etc., please pass along a brief highlight of your career or a résumé and your interests to Brian Piper, Chair NPD SIG, at brianjp827@aol.com.



Low-Hanging Fruit to Avoid Scope Creep

By Bruce Beer, Global Knowledge

What issue consistently appears in the top ten causes of project failure, what is the easiest and arguably most effective measure a PM can take to virtually eliminate that issue?



The answers are "Scope Creep," and "Change Management," respectively.

Without a solid definition of scope, scope creep is almost inevitable, and implementing change management is like trying to swim up the Colorado River in full flood!! However, if the PM and their team do a good job of identifying and documenting scope requirements, then scope creep can be virtually eliminated by a good change management plan and unyielding execution.

So - assuming the Project Manager and team have started scope definition with a deliverables-based Work Breakdown Structure (WBS) and have then broken these deliverables down into activity definition, they will end up with a list of activities required to complete those deliverables. Great start! However, we all know that before the ink is dry on the scope definition, some kind soul will usually want to change it. Does this cause disruption to the Project Manager's karma? Not if there is a good change management plan in place that has been communicated to all stakeholders and is being enthusiastically followed. Change is good and healthy for a project provided:

1. The entry point for change is the PM (without exception)
2. The change required has been well defined
3. All ripple or knock-on effects within and outside the project have been evaluated

4. All impacts on time, cost, functionality, risk, and quality have been assessed and documented on the change impact analysis
5. The customer (or entity paying for the project) approves and authorizes the change

If any one of the above does not happen, your project is in serious jeopardy. Let us look at each element in turn.

The change request is given to the PM

Without exception, the change request's path to glorious implementation starts with the PM who first receives it, logs it, then allocates it to a team member best suited to assess and evaluate that request.

It is well defined

A change is like any element of scope definition - if it is not well defined, neither the PM, the team, nor the customer can be clear or unified on what needs to be delivered - a grand opportunity for different interpretations by all concerned.

All ripple or knock-on effects have been evaluated

Once the change is received, the position of the affected deliverable on the WBS can be determined, and potential impacts on other areas can be assessed. Following this first assessment, a qualified team member can evaluate what other areas of the project may be affected. For example, lengthening an address line field from 25 to 35 characters on an input screen and database record may have impacts on many other areas such as invoice printing, search engines, etc.

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Low-Hanging Fruit to Avoid Scope Creep *C O N T I N U E D*

All effects on time, cost, functionality, risk, and quality have been assessed and documented on the change impact analysis

This is the crux of the impact analysis and is what the customer needs to understand before they authorize or reject the change. This may not only affect the baselines for scope, time, and/or cost, but other areas such as risk. The customer should also be able to assess the business case for potential effects of implementing the change before authorizing.

The customer (or entity paying for the project) approves and authorizes the change

If the customer does not approve the change, the decision is logged and the change request filed with no further action by the PM or team. If the customer does approve the request, this formally recognizes that they accept all the implications and impacts of that change, particularly to the triple constraint baselines. This will be logged by the PM, who will provide authorization to the team to implement the change.

Summary

Once a change management process is defined and communicated, the next task is for the PM to review it thoroughly at the Kick-off meeting so that the team is in no doubt of the process to follow if anyone asks them to implement a change, or if they want to propose a change themselves. It should be heavily stressed that no change at all will be implemented without approval by the PM. It is also advisable, for the PM's longevity in the job, to emphasize that not adhering to this process would be a career limiting event!!

Why is this easy to implement? Because it just needs one standard process, communication of that process to all stakeholders, and strict adherence to the process during execution.

What if there is no impact to time or cost baselines - do we still need to go through the process? **Absolutely yes!!** Supposing a minor screen change is requested that will re-arrange the appearance of fields on the screen and maybe add a new easily accessible field - none of which will take additional time or money to implement because it was requested before there has been any work done on that deliverable. When it comes to acceptance, the acceptor will look at the specification, then look at what is delivered, and say, "Lo! Verily this is not good!!," and will fail acceptance because the specified deliverable and the actual deliverable are not identical. However, if there is a formally authorized change request to explain the difference, the acceptor will say, "Lo! Verily this is good," and will place a tick in the right box.

One common issue with this process is that the optimum resource to assess a change request is often working on a critical path activity, and time taken for evaluation may affect the timeline of the project. This has many project dependent solutions which could be the source of a further paper!

The moral is to identify, communicate, emphasize, and strictly adhere to a change management process - it could save the project, and with it, the PM's career aspirations (but only where there has been a good initial scope definition).

This article was originally published in Global Knowledge's Management in Motion e-newsletter, named Business Brief. Global Knowledge (www.globalknowledge.com) delivers comprehensive hands-on project management, business analysis, ITIL, and professional skills training. Visit our online Knowledge Center for free white papers, webinars, and more.

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3 KEY ELEMENTS OF EFFECTIVE BUSINESS COMMUNICATION

By Barbara Bulleit, Global Knowledge

Communication

We communicate all the time, every day. Sometimes we're even aware of it! We communicate through gesture, body language, facial expressions, and tone of voice as well as through the words we speak. These variables can be joined in a variety of ways in our communication. Add to this mix: language; cultural and social differences; educational background; physical proximity; and individual fears, insecurities, strengths, and weaknesses. No wonder communication is complex! There is a huge amount of information on communication and different methodologies for improvement. The following offers one perspective on communication.

First of all, being successful in business requires effective communication. This paper focuses on effective business communication, although the information can be applied generally. To untangle the mix described above and to improve communication, we can focus on several key elements:

- Purpose
- Style
- Listening

Purpose

In business, when we communicate we usually have a purpose. Sometimes we have not considered that purpose sufficiently before beginning the dialogue, which can lead to confusion and mixed messages. So, first we must clarify our purpose. What do I want as a result of this communication? What would be a successful outcome?

As an example let's consider dialogue with an employee regarding a new assignment. Initially, we may look at the assignment and consider that its successful completion is the purpose. But let's break this process further down into smaller steps, with handing off the assignment being the first step. Our desired outcome FOR THE MEETING to hand off the assignment might be:

- Employee fully understands the assignment
- Responds to questions to ensure understanding
- Is able to paraphrase assignment requirements
- Is aware of consequences of completing or not completing assignment
- Employee has an idea of how to proceed
- Articulates next steps
- Identifies problems, etc
- Or we and employee discuss together
- Employee knows resources available
- Employee knows where to go for help
- We and employee agree on a follow-up status check meeting

If we have been successful in this first communication regarding the assignment, we have already established a paradigm for communication during the assignment work, including follow-ups to check status, make corrections, and to compliment upon completion. Clarity in the initial communication makes a huge difference. And to back up one step, clarifying our purpose before starting the communication can separate effective communication from that which is unclear, does not have sufficient detail, leaves no room for questions or advice, or does not ensure the employee can gain access to sufficient resources.

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3 KEY ELEMENTS OF EFFECTIVE BUSINESS COMMUNICATION *CONT.*

A clearly identified purpose can mean the difference between success or failure, and while thinking through a purpose may take time initially, we will eventually form a consistent habit of clarifying desired outcome - which usually leads to better results.

Style

Style has to do with who we are and how who we are affects our communication. We may engage in dialogue with little knowledge of the impact of individual differences. Some of us may have a higher awareness of style differences and still not use this awareness when communicating. Others of us become aware of stylistic differences only when having a problem communicating. Let's stop for a moment and further define "style".

Style is influenced by many factors, some of which were defined at the beginning of this article. A longer list might include culture, upbringing, religion, gender, age, education, language, race, politics - and this is not a total list. Some of the influences of our early years are mitigated or enhanced during our growth and experience. In all, we become who we are, and who we are influences our communication.

Let's stay at this level of detail and agree that generally at work we do not sit down and tick off

someone! Then how do we overcome some of our differences in order to communicate effectively? We consider style: mine and theirs. Some of us tend to be more direct and/or assertive, or even aggressive. Some of us tend toward being indirect and/or passive. Here are some characteristics of each type.

Direct and Assertive/Aggressive	Passive and Indirect
"Take charge" attitude; may have aggressive tendencies	More laid back tendency
May interrupt or tend to dominate the dialogue	May hesitate, wait to speak up, or have to be drawn out
Does not always seek dialogue; instead "tells" a lot	Lack of response does not necessarily indicate agreement or approval; has to be probed
Does not always see the other person's side; may be perceived as close-minded	Sometimes prefers for others to make decisions
May assume that passivity indicates agreement	Passive style may not indicate true feelings and attitudes
Non-verbal clues easier to detect since they are more openly expressed	Non-verbal clues follow passive characteristics and require more careful attention
Tends to decide or answer quickly	May need time rather than having to respond immediately

This simple table provides a general understanding of two basic styles. It's easy to see how communication may break down between these two types. Most of us do not easily fall into these simple categories but may have characteristics of each, which may change or vary on different days. All of this adds to the complexity of communications.

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3 KEY ELEMENTS OF EFFECTIVE BUSINESS COMMUNICATION *CONT.*

Having some knowledge of a person's style can help us. To try to break down the complexity we can use the elements in the table to formulate helpful questions, such as the following.

- Generally, what is his attitude: take charge or laid back?
- Does she comfortably engage in dialogue with others?
- Does he add comments and ask questions?
- Is it necessary to draw her out, to solicit her opinions?
- Does she listen to others or have a tendency to interrupt?

We can see how to use this style information to gain a better understanding of the person with whom we want to communicate. For example, if Sally's style is to be assertive or aggressive, she might have to work hard to hold back some of that take charge mentality and her tendency to speak up, dominate, and not read non-verbal clues. If Sally's style is passive and indirect she might have to make more effort to participate in a discussion, to voice her opinions or misgivings, and to ask questions.

It's easy to see how we can use this same information to gain more insight about our own style. After all, it takes at least two people to communicate and we are part of that formula. So we have to apply these questions to ourselves as well.

- Am I more aggressive or laid back?
- Do I ask questions of others?
- Is my tendency to accept in the moment then voice my opinions later?
- Do I consider other people's opinions, do I ignore their input, or do I just withdraw?

Once we've determined our style and the style of the other person, we have to consider the dynamic of the two. Two aggressive people may have to each work harder at allowing the other to talk and voice opinions. Two passive people may tend to come to conclusions too quickly, or may not uncover issues or differences. One of each will have to be very aware of the other's differences and make the effort required to accommodate those differences. Taking the time to think about our own style, then to consider the style of the other person, generates huge returns in communication. These returns include:

- Increased ability of the passive/indirect person to express
- Increased ability of the aggressive/direct person to listen
- Ability to allow and work out differences
- Realization that we each offer strengths as well as weaknesses
- Achieving more together than possible as individuals

Recognizing style or personal characteristics is key to successful business communications.

Listening

Active listening takes energy; it's work. To actively listen to someone means the following:

- Focus eyes and mind on the person speaking
- Indicate listening through eye contact, note taking, and body language
- Respond appropriately with comments, questions, or paraphrasing

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3 KEY ELEMENTS OF EFFECTIVE BUSINESS COMMUNICATION *CONT.*

The first step is the most difficult: focusing solely on the person speaking versus thinking of what we want to say next, beginning to analyze, or even coming up with a solution! We can minimize these tendencies by making good eye contact with the person speaking so that our focus is only on that person. Quelling the desire to analyze, problem solve, etc. means we have to WORK hard. It takes a strong effort to halt or slow down these urges. If we don't stop them, then our focus is not on the person but is on our own words and thoughts, and we are not getting all of the information they are telling us. Short circuiting active listening means we short circuit them and ourselves. When this does happen and we're aware of it, we can stop the person and ask him or her to repeat what they said. We might say, "Would you please repeat that so I will have a full understanding," to cover our embarrassment for not listening!

Making eye contact with a person may depend upon style or culture. Some cultures prefer not to have direct eye contact. Our style assessment will help us to determine whether or not that is true for the person with whom we are dealing. Our assessment will also help us to establish which other mechanisms to use to indicate we are truly focused on what the person is saying.

Responding appropriately is a real indication of active listening. When we talk with teenagers we might ask them to repeat what we just said. If they repeat verbatim we know they heard us and can "parrot." If they paraphrase or explain what we said in their own words, we know they really listened and understood. The ability to paraphrase is a powerful tool to use with our fellow employees. If we have any doubt of their understanding, having them paraphrase is a good way to check it out.

Another appropriate response is to ask questions. If we are listening to the person, asking appropriate questions helps that person to know we are really listening. It works the other way as well. If an employee or colleague does not ask us questions or does not respond appropriately, we know we need to review again, repeat using different words, draw a diagram, or whatever else we need to do to help that person understand.

Active listening is not something we need to do all the time; in fact, we could not. What's important is to determine when to use active listening. A good measurement is to say that we should actively listen anytime not listening could result in damaging or hurtful consequences.

Summary

Behind our communication is a purpose. That purpose may be assigning a new task, asking an employee to solve a problem, or providing feedback on performance. Our next step is to understand style: that of the employee and our own, which helps us to modify our own style and better understand how to work with the employee's style. As we talk with the employee we can use active listening to ensure that we are getting complete information and to ensure the employee is listening to us. The next time we are ready to communicate let's make sure we do the following:

- Clarify purpose - what we want as a result of the communication
- Consider style, theirs and ours, to facilitate effective communications
- Make a conscious effort to actively listen

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3 KEY ELEMENTS OF EFFECTIVE BUSINESS COMMUNICATION *CONT.*

Clarity of purpose, identifying style, and active listening are tools to facilitate communication in any direction: with employees, with peers, and up the chain.

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LETTER FROM THE CHAIR *CONT.*

In order for the NPD SIG to be successful as a virtual community within PMI, we must work together as a group by sharing new product development knowledge, ideas, best practices through articles and webinars. Each member can receive valuable PDUs for their efforts and contributions to the NPD SIG. If you feel that you would like to contribute to building the NPD SIG up to a level that meets member expectations, we ask that you contact anyone of the NPD SIG board members. Great ideas come from our members who work everyday in their respective industries to develop and implement novel new product development processes and tools.

PMI Launches New Credential: The PMI Risk Management Professional (PMI-RMP)SM

In October 2007, PMI announced the development of a new credential within the specialty area of project risk management, now formally introduced as the PMI Risk Management Professional (PMI-RMP)SM. PMI is excited to announce the global launch of this new credential.

PMI is offering an inaugural incentive for eligible candidates to become one of the first PMI-RMP credential holders. The first 100 candidates who sit for the examination between 29 August and 31 October 2008 will receive 50% off the price of the examination as well as be entered into one of four regional drawings for US\$1,000. Candidates can begin applying and scheduling now.

To qualify for the PMI-RMP examination:

- applicants must have a bachelor's degree or global equivalent
- have 3,000 hours of project risk management experience within the last three to five years
- 30 hours of formal education in project risk management (including seminars, conferences, classes and more)

Those with a high school diploma or global equivalent need 4,500 hours of project risk management experience and 40 contact hours of education in project risk management.

To maintain the credential, PMI-RMPs must acquire 30 Professional Development Units (PDUs) per 3-year cycle in the specialty area of project risk management.

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