

PMI La Crosse Chapter Newsletter

August 2012

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It's hard to believe that the 2012-2013 PMI La Crosse Chapter season is right around the corner! It is my hope that each of you were able to enjoy a delightful, relaxing, and safe summer.

As I reflect on the 2011-2012 season, I'd like to take a moment to thank everyone who helped make the season a success.

Whether your contribution involved volunteering, renewing your chapter membership, attending events, or supporting the chapter behind the scenes, your support is very much appreciated. I'd also like to extend a special thank you to individuals who volunteered in an official capacity this season: Amy Gau, Candie Mc Kay, Eric Pool, Dave Schrandt, Kay Wais, and Ann Yates. Last, but not least, I wish to recognize my fellow board members, Sarah Arndt-Beyer, Unni Gopinathan, Steve Haack, Joan Rausch, Ingy Salib, Ajay Singh, Jack Wang, who worked tirelessly toward many goals including:

- Planned and conducted 13 Chapter meetings plus 2 full-day seminars featuring national speakers.
- Built a foundation for the future
 - Board of Directors conducted a strategic planning retreat
 - Fantastic volunteers – thank you!!
 - Increased sponsorships
- Reviewed chapter operations for opportunities to improve
 - Selected speakers from a variety of industries
 - Piloted pay at the door by credit card option

- Increased the number of breakfast meetings in Rochester due to popular demand.

The 2012 – 2013 Board of Directors has already begun meeting in preparation for the upcoming season. This years' board consists of the following:

- Laura Haynes- President
- Ajay Singh- Vice President
- Unni Gopinathan- VP of Communications
- Steve Haack- VP of Events - Rochester
- Eric Pool- VP of Membership
- Joan Rausch- VP of Finances
- Ingy Salib- VP of Marketing
- Anita Wood- VP of Events - La Crosse

Welcome to the board Eric and Anita! Sarah and Jack, thank you for your past contributions. You will be missed! The Board of Directors have three major goals that we will be focusing on this season:

- Re-consider changing chapter name to reflect both LaCrosse and Rochester presence
- Request grant from other R2 chapters to allow for the development of a 2-year operational fund reserve
- Develop marketing plan

We look forward to seeing you when our meetings resume in September for another season of growing, networking, and advancing the project management profession together as a chapter

Best Regards,

Laura Haynes, PMP
President – PMI La Crosse, WI Chapter

Interview with Steven Haack, PgMP, PMP



When did you decide on taking PgMP?

I decided to work on it in early 2011 when Liz Daugherty, another La Crosse Chapter PMI member, and I decided to go for it. We knew it would be a helpful credential to have even though we did not know too many Program Management Professionals.

How are you using it in the current job?

It has helped to think of my current work as a program, which it should be. A program is a set of related projects managed in a coordinated manner to increase the benefits achieved. With that in mind, I have delegated more work to projects in order to focus more on the higher overall goals. It keeps me thinking about stakeholder and business needs. Of course, the refresher on PMI terminology and earned value was valuable too.

Do you think there is growing demand for PgMPs?

I think so. First, there are currently very few PgMPs so having the credential is a good differentiator. But in addition, gaining benefits from managing programs versus managing separate projects is bound to be a trend that calls for more Program Management Professionals.

Did you have any surprises while getting the PgMP credential?

Most people are surprised to learn that once you pass the exam, you still need to “pass” the multi-rater assessment. This is where 12 of your subordinates, peers, and managers are surveyed and rate you on your program management performance. This is easy compared to the exam, but it is a final step not to be ignored.

Your advice to others on getting PgMP certified and how did you prepare?

Good question. For me, the PgMP exam was much more difficult than the PMP exam. I have always been a good student and wanted to get all the questions right. Impossible. Although you have to know the Standard for Program Management and PMBOK well, I had to shift my way of thinking to focus less on

getting the correct answer to thinking more subjectively and practically. The first answer was really usually the best choice for me. That, and be prepared to study a lot!

Meet PMI La Crosse Board Members

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Solid Advice for Project Managers

By Kay Wais, PMP

For our summer PMI Chapter newsletter I thought I would share some light, short tidbits of advice instead of a lengthy, deep article. Hope you enjoy!

To be a better project manager, take care of yourself physically and emotionally

Tom Peters says that every project deserves to be a “Wow” project. So if you don’t start each new project thinking, “I can’t wait to get going on this project!” you are doing your project a disservice, and you probably need to recharge your batteries. Your lack of enthusiasm will directly affect your project team. Your energy will be very noticeable.

Favorite ways to recharge include exercising, doing something to pamper yourself, taking sabbaticals, traveling, and finding things to do away from work that you truly enjoy. Project management is a high burn-out field. You are human and you are going to need breaks. Either you schedule them informally, or your mind and body will take them without your permission (coast on the job).

It’s summertime now. And living in the Midwest, our recreation opportunities are very attractive. So why not think about a few of your favorite ways to recharge your battery. It’s all for the good of your project!

Take advantage of International Project Management Day (IPM Day)

About two years ago I decided to become involved with the IPM Day through my mentor and the IPM Day founder, Frank Saladis, who said, “*IPM Day is intended to encourage project based organizations worldwide to schedule some type of recognition event within their organizations or coordinated locally with others to truly demonstrate appreciation for the achievements of project managers and their teams.*” And since he started it in 2004, IPM Day is now celebrated with high-level and local governmental proclamations, hundreds of events, and thousands of actions of personal recognition. Our own La

Crosse Mayor has provided proclamations for IPM Day for the past two years.

The first Thursday of every November is IPM Day. This year it falls on November 3rd. Why not take advantage of this day and help honor the project managers that you work with and for? Go to www.internationalpmday.org for more information.

When possible, show up early at PMI chapter meetings and mingle to get to know other attendees.

It is pretty easy to predict if a new visitor is going to return to future PMI meetings by their body language within the first 10 minutes after they arrive. If they are visually demonstrating that “*I want to talk to people*”, they are there to network and they will get a lot of value out of meeting great people and they will be very likely to return for more.

Building your network and establishing business relationships outside of your employer provides you with connections that will enrich your life in many ways. Many of the people you will meet at PMI can mentor and coach you. All you need to do is get to know them and ask their advice. Some may connect you to career opportunities. Listening to some will help warn you away from working with certain vendors or organizations. All the information is helpful in one way or another. If you are only attending for the PDUs, we still want you to come – but you might as well maximize your time investment and get the much more valuable relationship benefits while you are there.

Use Mind Maps for Project Management Plans (and other kinds of notes as well)

I resisted, but was forced to start using mind maps when I started teaching project management in the accelerated learning program at Western Wisconsin

Solid Advice for Project Managers (cont.)

Technical College over 10 years ago. And at some point I came to the realization that when I used mind mapping it caused me to actually think broader and much better. You see the process of mind mapping seems to harness creativity. The ability to illustrate through drawings and association adds a flexible structure. It gives you the ability to easily add ideas, emphasize points, and add connections between ideas. Due to the visual interest, it communicates much more powerfully than typed lines of text. A mind map can be as graphical as it is text-based (although mine tend to lack in illustration and artistic flair).

In project management, mind mapping is especially helpful when developing your stakeholder identification, requirements gathering, WBS, risk identification, and quality planning. I'm not yet a fan of a particular mind mapping software program. MS Visio is the program I use when I need it electronically. But I really like creating mine on white erase boards or paper at this time. Now given a choice between documenting the "old fashioned way" or as a mind map – not only would I choose to capture documentation in a mind map, I would also much prefer to review and reread a mind map for long-term memory and retention benefits.

Validate Critical Data

Often a project manager will inherit much of their project information. This second-hand information is highly suspect, as illustrated in the old children's game where the story changes a little bit each time it is retold, until it is far from the truth. The information you inherit is always worthy of validating. Other times, even when the information was correct initially as time passes the project environment or facts change. And the added benefit of this practice is to cause the sponsor to think a bit deeper about the issue than they did initially, and have the opportunity to change their answers.

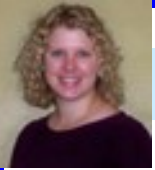
Don't wait for somebody to "pass you the ball"

One fellow PMI chapter member who was job hunting vented that *"I have been waiting for someone to pass me the ball for a very long time now. Once someone does that, I will run with it."* My comment back was *"you have always had the ball, but you don't seem to see it."* I can understand how job hunting, and waiting for the next great project to start, and even things like submitting your name for a board position or for special recognition can all feel like somebody else has your ball. There you are waving your arms, but they don't seem to "get it".

But you should not spend more than a fleeting moment putting your life on hold for a decision that may or may not be made in your favor. You need to have so many initiatives, interests, opportunities in the works, education programs you are learning from, and projects happening, that you are always moving your own ball forward regardless of any one decision or person.

Shortly after the ball conversation, the PMI chapter member went on to form her own consulting business. And after she starting making her own things happen, the job opportunities starting coming in and she took one of them. And I think the action of starting a consulting company, and landing a client, proved what these employers needed to see – that she could make things happen.

So in summary, enjoy your summer, put Nov. 1st (IPM Day) on your calendar, get to your PMI meetings early and meet new people there, use mind mapping for notes, validate critical data, and run with your ball.



Back To Basics— Sarah Arendt

The end of the PMI season is a great time to reflect on all the new skills we've learned and ideas we've been exposed to, but it's also a perfect time to consider all of those other skills we've picked up over the years, the ones we sometimes take for granted—*the basics*. I try to do this at the close of every project (formally, we call it reviewing the lessons learned; informally, it's just rehashing what went well and what didn't). I'm sure that you, like me, find yourself thinking how glad you are you did certain things—and how you wish you had done others. Often, the things we're thankful we did, and the things we wish we had done, are the basics—and it's helpful, from time to time, to remind ourselves about them. What follows is my personal review of five “can't live without” project management basics:

Communication—open, up-front, and frequent communication is vital to the success of a project. If something is going wrong (or is about to *go* wrong), talk about it. Talk about it right away. If something is going right, talk about that, too. Share your expectations. Let your team share *their* expectations. Develop a communication schedule—how often are you going to communicate? What are you going to communicate? What do you expect others to communicate? How will you communicate? Who should be included on what communications? Good communication can enhance a project, while poor communication can cripple it.

Listening—listening goes arm in arm with effective communication. Being a project manager is not about doing all the talking—in fact, I find that it's often quite the opposite. Being a good project manager is about being able to ask the right questions, in the right way, and then actively listen to the response. It's about being there to hear (*really* hear) people's ideas, concerns, triumphs, and confessions, and then to be able to work collaboratively with them to develop an effective solution or action plan.

Planning—we've all heard it: if you fail to plan, you plan to fail. Boy, is this phrase dead on. I recently

kicked off a project where I took the time to write a formal project management plan, complete with risk assessment and communication planning. It was a significant investment in time, but I am glad I went through it. Proper planning is an incredibly worthwhile exercise. I don't think I've ever been at the tail-end of a project and thought, “Wow, I wish I hadn't done all that planning!”

Risk assessment—I think this can be as informal or as formal as you'd like it to be. But get your team together and have the “what if” conversation. Brainstorm. Think outside the box. Review old lessons-learned. Talk about what can go wrong—and what you can do to mitigate it. You'll be surprised about what you come up with and pleased that you were able to plan for it.

Mind the triple constraints—schedule, quality, cost. If one is affected, what's going to happen to the rest? If you answered “nothing,” or even, “we'll make it work,” you're kidding yourself, and you're not fooling your project stakeholders. If something has to get done faster, you will either be sacrificing quality, or you'll be spending more for it. If something has to be of higher quality, it will likely take longer and/or cost more. If you want to cut costs, things might not get done as quickly, or you'll sacrifice quality. Being an effective project manager means being able to balance all three of these while still meeting the needs of your stakeholders.

While there are many more “basics” and even more “advanced” project management skills, these are the five I return to time and time again as the foundations for a successful project. That's not to say that culture, scheduling tools, and other topics and techniques aren't important, but these are five of my favorites that have helped see me through many projects (or, conversely, came up in the lessons-learned). So, as you kick-off or close out your next project, take some time to think—what are the project management basics I can (or should have) applied?

Join the conversation: share YOUR favorite project management basics on the La Crosse PMI [Facebook Page](#) or [LinkedIn Group](#).