

PMI Mid-Mo Chapter News

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Nine Project Management Fallacies, Part 2

Some of what we “know” about managing projects just isn’t so. Identifying the fallacies of project management reduces risk and enhances your ability to complete projects successfully. Here’s Part II of a little catalog of the fallacies of project management.

Peter loved his chocolate chip cookies, but he liked this conversation with Trish and Nan even more. Holding his hands over the side of his chair to brush the cookie crumbs off them onto the ground, he added “And his discussion of wishful thinking was really insightful.”

Nan broke off a tiny chunk of her cookie, ate it, and sipped her coffee. “Mmmm, I thought so too,” she said. “Knowing that we fall into these fallacy traps because of our humanness made me more accepting of it, less guilty.”

Trish was puzzled. “Yeah, but how does that help the project?” “That’s just it,” said Nan. “Knowing that the fallacies are part of being human makes it easier to acknowledge these errors when we make them.” Peter finished Nan’s thought. “And that way we can own up to them faster, maybe even before they do any damage.” Nan picked up the last chunk of cookie and ate it. Peter and Trish had long ago finished theirs, but Nan liked making cookies last. “The critical thinking fallacies were my favorites,” she said. “I like learning how to think more clearly.”

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Fallacies have a deep connection to what we are as human beings

PROjections

PMI Mid-MO Chapter News



A Reminder to Chapter Members

Please be sure to keep your email address with PMI up to date. When mass mailings are sent to members, we use the email address that you have on file with PMI. Currently there are several members that are not receiving notices and other communications because their addresses are not deliverable. If you haven't been receiving PMI communications via email, check the Member Information area at <https://secure.pmi.org/memberapp/code/home.asp> to be sure your information is correct.

Speaker Gifts Assist Mid-Missouri Charities

Did you know Chapter speakers are invited to direct their speaker appreciation gifts to charities of their choice? Jay Carter, our January 2006 Chapter meeting speaker, chose to donate to Hospice of Jefferson City and Mid-Missouri on behalf of the Mid-Missouri Chapter PMI.

PayPal Payment Expands to Group Registration

With the November 2005 Chapter meeting, the Mid-Missouri Chapter PMI began accepting individual meeting registrations and credit card payments via PayPal. PayPal accepts payment via MasterCard, VISA, American Express, Discover, and PayPal accounts. In 2006, we plan to roll out PayPal individual registration and payments for seminars, group registration and payment for meetings and seminars, and provide Chapter sponsors the ability to make sponsorship payments via PayPal.

We hope you are pleased with the additional convenience of being able to register and pay electronically for Chapter events. Let any member of the Chapter Board know your thoughts on how this new service is working for you and your organization.

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Volunteer Opportunities

Content Editor (2 positions)

Position Description:

As a member of the PMI Mid-Missouri Chapter's Communications team, the **Content Editor** produces the Chapter's bimonthly Newsletter. The **Content Editor** may also be responsible for editorial content of written material on the Chapter's Web site, <http://www.pmimidmo.org/> and may assist with the Chapter's publicity for Chapter events. If you are a PMP, the Chapter's **Content Editor** position may provide up to 5 PDU's per year to meet requirements for continuing PMP certification. For Missouri-certified project managers, this position qualifies for up to 5 PDU's per year.

The **Content Editor** works with the Newsletter Production Editor, Sponsorship and Advertising committee, Webmasters, and Vice-President of Communications.

Requirements and Activities

- Reporting, editing, or writing background is desirable but not required. Interest in writing and communications are helpful for this position.
- Availability and commitment to meeting bimonthly Newsletter publication deadlines at the beginning of January, March, May, July, September, and November
- Excellent English grammar and editing skills
- A "nose for news" for project management stories of interest to Chapter members
- Compile articles and other project management sources from PMI's weekly *Friday Facts* electronic newsletter for publication in Chapter Newsletter
- Understanding of copyright regulations
- Skilled in use of Microsoft Word
- Knowledge of or willingness to learn how to convert Word documents to PDF
- Prepare Chapter meeting minutes for posting on the Chapter's web site by converting material from Word to PDF format and sending to Webmasters with instructions for posting
- Receive advertising material from Sponsorship and Advertising committee for publication in newsletter

Estimated Time Commitment

- Up to 6 hours per month

How to Volunteer

To volunteer, or for more information, e-mail Carol Elliott, VP Communications, at pmivpcomm@pmimidmo.org

Nine Project Management Fallacies: Part 2 continued

Peter sipped his coffee. "Mmm." He swallowed. "But how do we avoid those fallacies?" Nan had an idea. "Maybe we should inspect our project plans, like we inspect components." Trish was intrigued. "Yeah, and I know what I'd put at the top of the checklist." "OK, I'll bite," said Peter. "What?" Trish was ready. "The Nine Project Management Fallacies." Not a bad idea. These last five fallacies have a deep connection to what we are as human beings, and include errors of critical thinking. Here's Part II of a little catalog of the fallacies of project management. For Part I, see "Nine Project Management Fallacies: Part I," in the [January-February](#) issue.

These next two fallacies arise because of our all-too-human hopes and wishes. We long for a world where we can substitute any person for any other, and where doubling resources halves the schedule. Sadly, longing doesn't make it so.

The Fungibility Fallacy

The Fungibility Fallacy holds that each person produces one hour of output in one hour, and that we can substitute people for one another. Terms that suggest this fallacy are *man-month*, *headcount*, and *FTE*. Often, only a few people can perform certain tasks. Using the project management tools that distinguish the skills of large numbers of unique individuals takes time and effort, and even then they produce somewhat fictitious results. And running "lean and mean" makes the problem worse. If you count the cost of delays and lost market windows due to overloading key people, running a little "fatter and kinder" might actually be more profitable.

The Linearity Fallacy

This fallacy holds that the human effort required to execute a project scales in proportion to project attributes such as project size or total budget. Not only do operating costs per unit of output grow rapidly with project size, but the converse is also true: costs decline unexpectedly slowly as we scale the project down in size. This happens because we have difficulty abandoning control processes as we move down in size. We lose in both directions.

Project management is an inherently nonlinear activity. The complexity of an effort grows not in proportion to the effort, but combinatorially with the size of the effort, following the growth in the number of possible person-to-person interactions with increasing team size.

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Nine Project Management Fallacies: Part 2 continued

Finally here are two fallacies that arise from failures of critical thinking.

The Normative Fallacy

This fallacy holds that when we ask some people their opinions, and most of them agree, then they're correct. Usually we select people non-randomly, choosing those who will give us desirable answers, or those we can trust, or those of high rank. Non-random polling might provide comfort, but it's hardly scientific, and it almost always leads to biased conclusions. To get truly useful polling data, you must poll people randomly.

The Availability Heuristic in risk management, we often estimate the probabilities of certain events. We're using the Availability *Heuristic* [Tversky *et al.*] when we estimate these probabilities by sensing the difficulty of imagining or understanding the string of events that lead to the risk.

For instance, when we ask people whether being attacked by a shark is more or less likely than being hit by falling airplane parts, they usually answer that shark attack is more likely. Actually, being hit by falling airplane parts is 30 times more likely, but people are fooled because it's easier to imagine shark attacks.

Non-random polling might provide comfort, but it's hardly scientific

Estimating probabilities is unlikely to produce reliable results. Use real data, or use huge error bars.

The Grandiosity Fallacy

Confronting a problem, we sometimes address a generalization of the problem instead, hoping to solve a host of similar problems, and thereby solving the original problem almost "for free." Rarely does the reality match the wish.

Grandiosity usually generates two kinds of trouble. First, it's often more expensive and time-consuming than originally estimated. Second, the people of the organization rarely want the general solution. If they did, they probably would have sought it in the first place.

Sometimes customers don't know the value of the general solution, and telling them about it might produce a better outcome. But usually they want only what they asked for. Work with them on that first.

Track the incidence of these nine fallacies in your organization. Use them to inspect project plans.

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Nine Project Management Fallacies: Part 2 continued

Probably your projects will have fewer surprises, or at least you'll be just a little less likely to be hit by falling airplane parts.

[Tversky] - Tversky, A., and Kahneman, D.
"Availability: a heuristic for judging frequency and probability." *Cognitive Psychology* 5, 207-232, (1973).

Rick Brenner works with people in dynamic problem-solving organizations that need state-of-the-art teamwork. He writes and edits a weekly newsletter available at his Web site, www.ChacoCanyon.com. Copyright © 2005 Richard Brenner

PROjections continued

Deewayne Hord, Director of Operations, Hospice of Jefferson City and Mid-Missouri, wrote to Chapter members: "On behalf of Hospice of Jefferson City and Mid-Missouri and our residents, we would like to thank you for your donation of \$100. These funds will continue helping us provide for the sick that stay at our Friendship House and others in the community. Thanks for thinking of us."

PayPal Payments for Meetings and Chapter Events

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Chapter Meeting Fees Changed to \$20 for Both Members and Non-Members Effective January 2006

Chapter Board members voted at the December 2005 Board meeting to change the cost of Chapter meetings to \$20 for both Chapter members and guests effective January 2006. The \$20 meeting cost more accurately reflects the cost of food, speaker expenses, and administration of Chapter meetings. A single rate structure simplifies meeting registration and administrative tasks.

Upcoming Chapter Events

Chapter Meeting – May 11, 2006, 5:00-7:15 PM

Mental Martial Arts - Learn to stay FIRED UP and ready to take on the world: AKA, Life!

Speaker: Brian Adams
Sponsored by: [Tier Technologies, Inc.](#)
Where: [Summit Lake Winery](#)
Capitol View Room (upstairs meeting room)
1707 South Summit Drive
Holts Summit, MO 65043-2100
(573) 896-9966

All-Day Workshop – May 11, 2006

Mental Martial Arts: Defend yourself against your toughest opponent...YOU!

Speaker: Brian Adams
Sponsored by: [CIBER, Inc.](#)
Where: [Ramada Inn](#)
1510 Jefferson Street
Jefferson City, MO 65110
(573) 635-7171

To register or for more information, visit the Chapter's web site

[PMI: Mid-Missouri Chapter](#)

Advertising and Sponsorship

Interested in promoting your organization's project management related services? Consider sponsoring PMI Mid-Missouri Chapter meetings and seminars, or placing web button advertising on the Chapter's Web site, www.pmimidmo.org.

To learn about sponsorship opportunities, visit our sponsorship page at [PMI Mid-Missouri Chapter Sponsorship](#), or contact a members of our Communications team at ads@pmimidmo.org.

CHAPTER MAILING ADDRESS:

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