

# Discovering New Horizons in Project Management

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We all live in a momentous time slot as for the first time in civilization the human networks are being built. This process has far-reaching implications and will cross all frontiers of imagination. It is just a beginning. We have not yet seen the tip of the iceberg. The new game, which is emerging, has yet to establish its rules. Who will be the winners and losers, difficult to predict except those perhaps who have won the race against time in the time domain. Those who have tamed time. The tail of the time has shifted to the forehead and only those can hold time that are ahead. Internet has changed this world. There is no shortage of ideas but the will to implement.

This new formation of world based on instantaneous connectivity in the mental plane and 7 by 24 working hours availability to the corporations has made the change management as the key factor in moving from the old to new world. **The delivery of Water (310BC), Gas (1817), Telephone (1877), Electricity (1882) and Road infrastructure (1910) conquered the thirst, cold, isolation, darkness and movement. They created the most spectacular changes in the history of mankind in the past.** To one generation they were technological miracles. To the next generation, they were practical necessities.

**In the present century, the new darkness now has been set in and can only be removed by the light of knowledge. We truly live in the knowledge age.** It is the basic ingredient for today to progress. Knowledge of one person must get transformed into a strategic resource of a company through lessons learned and share. This is the critical success factor for companies and individuals to come to a common ground.

Time is becoming the most crucial strategic weapon and the pressure is on to compressing time as much as humanly possible. The quantum of changes is phenomenal. The changes, which have occurred through the acquisition of information and analysis in less than last 10 years, have surpassed that, happened in the whole 20<sup>th</sup> century. It is forecasted that the changes, which would happen in the next 4 to 5 years, will surpass that of last 10 years. These unimaginable processes resulted in unprecedented rate of change giving rise to non-linear and complex transition process. This is one of the main Causes for the unbelievable expansion in the following of modern project management principles in the last 7 to 8 years. The growth of modern PM profession is 6 to 7 times as project management principles do address the issues of change and transition effectively throughout the life cycle of a project.

Coming back to Time compression domain, in my opinion, there have been 4 major sets of scenarios on which the world has seen the impact. Before 20<sup>th</sup> century, the time compression was significantly lower as men had to interact with the mother NATURE. You could not fiddle around with the nature and were governed by the natural time constants as when the monsoon will arrive and go. The agriculture society was based on such a situation. The beginning 20<sup>th</sup> century, we witness the low time compression as a result of Industrialization. We have better control on time as we dealt with the interaction between men and machine. Mid 20<sup>th</sup> century, the medium level of time compression came into existence when management initiatives played an important role in improving responsiveness. The key to propel the progress was to make human beings more responsive by compressing time. In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, time compression was enormous due to E-Technology. It is this high compression, which is making us to increasingly be more concerned in both the compression aspects and its reaction. You may compress but if you have no control on its reaction, it is simply disastrous.

Project management is emerging in its own right a distinct discipline. Research, Body of Knowledge, Common Understanding of practices, education, Standards and Certification are the 6 major components for a discipline to exist.

The new frontiers in project management are addressing the issues such as measuring project management maturity level of companies and institutions; building effective teams; managing risks; capitalizing failures into assets; communicating the vision without ambiguity and ultimately putting passion into work profile to convert vision into reality and abstract into concrete. The profitability alone is not the only scorecard, which needs to be improved. Societies and companies have to evolve their own companion scorecards for determining the success of projects and the methodologies. Only when Business Strategies, Infrastructure and Project Mindset are integrated that we see the companies and societies thrive. Project management plays the most crucial role in integrating these three main ingredients essential to progress. The project mindset is emerging based on new outlook. Some of the primary characteristics of project mindset are in compressing time, instantaneous response, knowledge sharing, leveraging negative encounters and putting passion before work.

Turmoil, uncertainties and unprecedented rate of change are all leading to one-way traffic confirming the postulate that conventional wisdom of managing projects is longer adequate to paint the future. We need to look beyond our nose and open the mind attached to the past. Innovative way seems to be the only way in managing change and transition. Innovation is becoming the right of every individual in a project.

Innovation management has no fix mould. Innovation management is not content with in command and control regime. Innovation management is based on entrepreneurial outlook in owning problems or forecasting and finding solutions. It is becoming different than owning capital. There is no ceiling and confinement of any sort. Project managers and team members are free to be on their own connected on a common platform of achieving excellence and results, which were never achieved before. This is tantamount to breaking of ceilings that have been rigidly fixed creating suffocation at the work place because being kept at very low height.

How should we liberate project teams from the torture of meeting time schedules and be the fire fighters as it sucks away the very basic meaning of life to enjoy while you work. Only in serene frame of mind that one tends to produce the very best. If the serene frame of mind is the prerequisite of art in music and paintings, how come it will not be when we work on projects. No, no, don't tell anyone that because project management is scientific and measurable. It may be true but does not make it opposite to art in all its naked form. Project management is an art and science of converting vision into reality and abstract into concrete. It is the over emphasis of scientific side of project management responsible for creating such havoc.

The following nine steps are suggestive measures to provide new dimensions to the management of projects.

### **Step 1:**

#### **Believing in discontinuity and not continuity with incremental improvements**

Continuity or the status quo is a function of quantum of changes. Incremental improvements are valid only when the rate of change is not excessive. Both the continuity and incremental improvements are linked with the rate of change and quantum. Beyond a threshold of rate of change, one cannot go with the continuity and incremental improvements. The modern day Internet and technological based world has witnessed the unprecedented rate of change and explosion in the quantum of changes. It is this process which has resulted in making continuity theory as baseless. Continuity in principle is to preserve the past where as discontinuity breaks the linkage with the past to the extent it can have fewer constraints to move into the future.

There is no choice except to believe in discontinuity as only then mind and body is prepared to accept the unknowns and be ready to face it and control thereafter.

### **Step2:**

#### **Owning the problems and sharing the solutions**

More one owns problem, more he becomes experienced. It is not the number of years of service one has performed for a company but how much number of problems was faced and owned is now becoming the benchmark to define an experienced person from inexperienced. The true spirit of entrepreneurial outlook is to

own the problems and solve the same and in this process make Money. The fixed mould mentality is to empower the problems to be faced outside than oneself and get the credit for solutions.

### **Step 3:**

#### **Breaking the status quo mentality**

No change means perpetuation of the Present into the Future. This is in contradiction to the nature as Future is not the extension of Present. Breaking the status quo mentality implies in taming the future as it is the future which becomes Present at some point of time. Focusing into Future and affecting the Present is anti-establishment and require concerted efforts to move out from the comfortable zones. Project managers can hardly afford to have status quo mentality as day in and day out they are involved in acting in present to affect Future. At times, when we do not get away from the status quo mentality, contradictions fall apart everywhere in the project between the two types of group- the champions of future and those who believe in extending Present.

### **Step 4:**

#### **Stepping out of comfortable zone**

As apart of the step 3 and in a way extension of it, the comfortable zone is to dear to break and cross. Fear of uncertainties makes the comfortable zone more comfortable than if the fear did not exist. The project managers of tomorrow are those who have so called comfortable zone carve out from that area which conventionally is uncomfortable and that is the zone of uncertainties. If we seek comforts in conquering the uncertainties with planning and indomitable spirit of winning, then we are able to provide project leadership and inspire the team members to plunge into risk taking.

### **Step 5:**

#### **Human Capital by passing Financial Capital**

While the agriculture society witnessed the Nature as the foremost, the 20<sup>th</sup> century saw the men-machine interaction as the key factor for the capital formation. 21<sup>st</sup> century in this Internet age is beginning to see the human capital surpassing the financial capital. Venture capitalists were all over the place to fund any idea, which they thought would create a brave new world. Its consequent failure in the last couple of years could not be attributed to the over faith in Human capital but absence of effective filtering mechanism from good to bad idea. While Return On Investment (ROI) could be seen as financial driven phenomena, Return On Time Invested (ROTI) is basically based human efforts and its deployment. ROTI will be more meaningful to ROI in the context of new processes on their way to unfold in the beginning of 21<sup>st</sup> century.

### **Step 6:**

#### **Transform work culture from 5 to 7 dimensions**

Conventionally we all live in the conventional 5 dimensions of space i.e. X, Y and Z, Time and Mind. We need to supplement on these 5 dimensions the additional 2 dimensions of Passion and Joy If we do what we want do then the gap between Wish and Reality is so little that one is in position to provide its very best. It is his/her added 2 dimensions, which make the total difference. The new miracles in project management will take place when we bring the work of joy like in the art domain of music and paintings in our project work.

### **Step 7:**

#### **Real number of encounters replacing number of years of experience**

The experience profile should be redefined by the number of encounters and problems faced instead of number of years. The wisdom evolved based on encounters is far richer than accumulated simply by repeating the same encounters n number of times in one's employee ship. The secret is to increase the encounters meaningful to ones own dream or passion profile.

## **Step 8:**

### **Seeking meaning out of change**

Change is first degree. It is a must. Change can be threat or an opportunity. It depends how one looks at it. If change is resisted, it becomes all the more difficult to see the real outcome of the change as it is partly distorted. Project implies change and that too a temporary one. It is essential to make people to have a real communication about the change. One of the major strategies to bring about a change is to communicate, communicate and communicate.

## **Step 9:**

### **Detachment from the fruits of the results**

To act is within one's control. To get the reward as a reaction to the action is not within one's purview. Too much emphasis on that part, which is not within our control, is a wasteful exercise instead concentrates on actions to the best of one's ability. The results so arrived at must be analyzed from the cause and effect relationship and constant learning must be made out of all such actions or group of actions. Attachment with the results of the actions often dilute one's own energy and may shift one's focus from the main road to its detour. Detachment from the results does not imply one should not demand or expect materialistic benefits, no, it only means that in case you do not get what you deserve, leave it and move forward rather than brooding over that part which is not within one's control. The journey comes to a standstill if we get attached to the surroundings and to the results of the present beyond a small time frame. Project managers and team members are never stationary. They must move on.

In summary, the new discovery or dimensions in project management heavily depends on the human factor of breaking ceilings, getting motivated all the time, working with passion, detachment with the results rather than with the actions, human capital surpassing that of financial capital, breaking the status quo mentality, owning the problems and solutions and creating discontinuity. **The journey has just begun and it must continue as in the human race, there is no finishing line.**

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