The New Rules for Project Success

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Dr. Laufer has lectured in many US corporations such as: AT&T, Bechtel, DuPont, Exxon, General Motors, IBM, Mobile, Stone and Webster, and Texaco. He has given seminars to executives and project managers at various organizations such as: Lockheed Martin, Motorola, NASA, Proctor & Gamble, and the US Department of Commerce.

Dr. Laufer is a member of the Editorial Review Board of the *Project Management Journal* and of *Construction Management and Economics*. He is also a member of the Advisory Board of the NASA Academy of Program and Project Leadership.

# Evolution of Models of Project Management

(Each model encompasses the previous ones)

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The UCP Model
Competent Practitioners Usually Know More Than They Can Tell
Explicit and Tacit Knowledge

Explicit Knowledge

- Words
- Numbers
- Data
- Scientific formulas
- Specifications
- Manuals
Tacit Knowledge

- Subjective insights
- Rules of thumb
- Intuition and hunches

- A body of perspectives
- Beliefs
- Values
The “Excellence Through Stories” Project

• A great deal of project management knowledge is tacit.

• Stories are very powerful in capturing and sharing tacit knowledge.

• Stories stimulate curiosity.

• Stories are memorable.
• **Excellence** is a better teacher than mediocrity.

• By collecting **success** stories from the best project managers you enable people to find role models to emulate.
A Good Story

1. Starts with a problem/conflict/challenge/, etc.

2. Describes a unique experience.

3. Describes concrete actions by people.

4. Makes a point! It arrives at some basic truth.
# “Success Stories”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Government</th>
<th>The ETS project</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Purpose</strong></td>
<td>Public relations &amp; teaching</td>
<td>Learning &amp; unlearning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Problems</strong></td>
<td>None</td>
<td>Central</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Focus</strong></td>
<td>Institutions, systems</td>
<td>People</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Focus</strong></td>
<td>Results</td>
<td>Actions &amp; results</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Scope</strong></td>
<td>Entire project</td>
<td>An isolated episode</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Source of data</strong></td>
<td>“Objective”</td>
<td>Subjective</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Source of Data

20 project managers from NASA

8 project managers from DOD

8 project managers from six agencies (DOC, DOE, DOI, DOT, FBI, and GSA)
Findings: The New Rules for Project Success

1. Adopt a Will to Win

2. Create a Results-Oriented Focus

3. Foster Sensitivity to Context

4. Collaborate through Trust
1. Adopt a Will to Win

- Have a sense of a mission; own the project.
- Challenge the status quo.
- Be willing to take (calculated) risks.
- Dare to fail, embrace failures as a source of learning.
- Set high, but realistic expectations.
- Persevere; set and adhere to (relatively) fixed targets by employing flexible tactics.
- Radiate a personal passion that is contagious.
<table>
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<tr>
<th>OLD</th>
<th>NEW (Theory-in-use, tacit)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(Espoused theory, explicit)</td>
<td>People &amp; Systems</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Systems</td>
<td>Courage &amp; Skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skills*</td>
<td>Leadership &amp; Management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Management</td>
<td>Emotional &amp; Mental intelligence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mental intelligence</td>
<td></td>
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</table>

*One of the highest priorities of the public project manager is to minimize the risk of embarrassing incidents.
2. Create a Results-Oriented Focus

• Create and maintain a focus.
• Focus on results.
• Focus on both, long-term and short-term results.
• Employ fast prototyping.
• Generate short-term wins.
• Create a sense of urgency.
• Adopt pragmatic and simple solutions.
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<td><strong>Processes</strong></td>
<td><strong>Results &amp; Processes</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Control</strong></td>
<td><strong>Learning &amp; Control</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Internal orientation</strong></td>
<td><strong>External &amp; Internal orientation</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Managing” risk (as an independent activity)</td>
<td><strong>Managing uncertainty &amp; Risk</strong></td>
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</table>
3. Foster Sensitivity to Context

• Fit procedures and systems to the situation.
• Employ formal and informal systems.
• Legitimize judgment-based decisions.

Rule # 3 says: there are numerous “unique” rules. It covers the entire project management body of knowledge.
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<td>One best way</td>
<td>Tailoring &amp; One best way</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Objective analysis</td>
<td>Subjective judgment &amp; Objective analysis</td>
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</table>
4. Collaborate through Trust

- Take recruiting very seriously; spend as much energy as possible on getting the right people.
- Develop teamwork.
- Build trust, allow for honest mistakes.
- Involve the customers and representatives of downstream phases as early as possible.
- Delegate authority and foster a strong sense of a mission by all team members.

Bottom line: lead all team members to embrace rule #1: “adopt a will to win”
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<td>Contracts</td>
<td>Trust &amp; Contracts</td>
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<tr>
<td>Training people for teamwork</td>
<td>Attracting the right people</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
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The four rules are highly interdependent
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<tr>
<td>Championship</td>
<td>2000s</td>
<td>CUQ, Dynamic Status Quo</td>
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Recent Shifts

• From work done via routine operations, to work accomplished via unique projects.

• From learning via formulas (explicit knowledge), to learning from stories (tacit knowledge).
You don’t write your success story with a pen, following project completion.

You “write” it with your actions as you progress through the project.

Leading a project to successful completion _is_ writing a unique story.
Implications: Creating a New Culture

People
Results
Trust
Risks, mistakes
Adaptation, experimentation
Judgment
Learning
Management of contradictions
Management of Contradictions
Leadership and management
People and systems
EQ and IQ
Flexibility and stability
Unlearning and learning