

UTD Project Management Symposium  
13 August 2010

# Leading Accelerated Projects™



Presented by  
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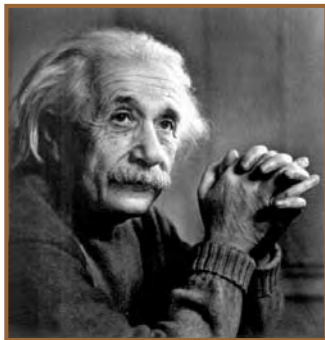
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Leading Accelerated Projects™

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“Without changing our patterns of thought, we will not be able to solve the problems we created with our current patterns of thought.”

— Albert Einstein

***... nor can projects be accelerated by 'amping up' existing methods of planning and execution.***

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## Seven Realities Shaping the AP Philosophy

1. Project delays are more often due to human factors than technical factors.
2. Process-oriented methodologies have little to say about human factors, except those that can be easily codified.
3. Project leadership is the common denominator in virtually every list of critical project success (or failure) factors.
4. Human factors are amplified in accelerated projects, making the need project leadership especially acute.
5. Traditional project management methods and tools have little to say about project leadership.
6. Since a project is a complex system that's part of a larger system, any attempt to fast-track a project that doesn't account for this reality can offer partial results . . . *at best*.
7. Every accelerated project is unique.

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## Contrasting Strategies for Accelerating Projects

<u>Structured methodologies</u>		<u>Systems approach</u>
• Highly prescriptive; often geared for certain types of projects	➔	• Adaptive to environment and unique circumstances
• Process oriented	➔	• Heavy emphasis on human factors
• Analytical ... focuses on the elements of the process	➔	• Integrative ... considers multiple dimensions and their <i>relationships</i>
• Costs: learning curve; esoteric language; system suboptimization	➔	• Costs: sacred cows; change-pain; leader development
• Benefits: easy to codify; requires little if any OTBT	➔	• Benefits: OoM cycle time compression; system compatibility

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### Project Excellence > Σ (Excellent Tasks)

**Hummer:**  
excellent frame

**Rolls Royce Phantom:**  
excellent engine

**Ford F-250:**  
excellent brakes

**Saab 9-5:**  
excellent air conditioner

**Chrysler 300:**  
excellent drive train

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Scientists started to understand crystals only when they ignored what they are made of ... and concentrated on how their components were arranged.

Ian Stewart, in  
*What Shape is a Snowflake?*

**... opportunities for accelerating projects aren't likely to be found by drilling down on project tasks.**

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***Take a lesson from the beaver ...***



***... consider the system before  
you start gnawing!***

## **Two Classes of Accelerated Projects**

### ***Crisis-Mode Acceleration***

- Driven by an urgent need or situation
- Seeks a reduction in cycle time of 20% to 90% (0.1 – 1 OoM)
- Has full support of key decision makers and stakeholders
- High visibility with *more at stake than the stated requirements*
- Willing to take risks that wouldn't otherwise be taken
- Encourages creative thinking and novel solutions

### ***Planned Acceleration***

- Driven by the desire to improve competitiveness or cut costs
- Seeks *consistent* on-time delivery (in the case of chronically late projects) and a 5% to 20% reduction in cycle time otherwise
- Gets limited support and attention from top managers
- Willing to take more risks than conventional projects, to a limit
- Encourages doing as much possible with existing resources

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## What is a Project Leader?

```

    graph TD
      A([Each Accelerated Project is Unique]) --> B[A project leader is what a project leader does!]
      B --> C([Match Traits & Abilities to the Job])
    
```

Each Accelerated Project is Unique

A project leader is what a project leader does!

Match Traits & Abilities to the Job

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## So What Does an AP Leader Do?

**Consider this scenario ...**

During a strategy meeting the Marketing VP announced it had been “decreed from above” that the timeline for a certain project would need to be slashed from 12 months to 6 months. Since you assisted with the preliminary project plan, you know this will pose some serious challenges.

**What actions & interventions would likely be required of the APL given these sketchy circumstances?**

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- ...
- n.

```

    graph TD
      A([Each Accelerated Project is Unique]) --> B[A project leader is what a project leader does!]
      B --> C([Match Traits & Abilities to the Job])
    
```

Each Accelerated Project is Unique

A project leader is what a project leader does!

Match Traits & Abilities to the Job

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## 10 Interventions of an AP Project Leader

1. Runs interference for the project team
2. Finds and utilizes workarounds when necessary
3. Follows the project plan, but readily adapts to circumstances
4. Removes barriers and roadblocks for the project team
5. Secures external support and resources for project team
6. Serves as Chief Communicator for the project
7. Ensures there are no disconnects in task handoffs
8. Manages changing requirements and developer gold plating
9. Doesn't wait to be told what's going on ... few surprises
10. Intervenes when conflict arises or priorities veer off track

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## 10 Attributes of an AP Project Leader

1. Decisive
2. Calm and cool under pressure ... seems to thrive on chaos
3. Comfortable dealing with ambiguity and taking risks
4. Comfortable dealing with human factors and conflict intervention
5. Trusts her/his intuition when factual data is lacking
6. Not afraid to take actions that exceed his/her authority
7. Not afraid of bad news
8. Passionate about keeping the project moving and on track
9. Passionate about communications ... up, down, across
10. Has a keen sense of what's important ... sees big picture!

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## Questionable “Solutions” for Accelerating Projects

- Crashing the project
- Pressuring the project team to work harder and longer
- Sloganeering
- Acceleration by decree
- Rigid adherence to methodologies
- One-dimensional solutions
- Primary emphasis on technology solutions
- Micromanaging the project
- Compressing the schedule by excessively overlapping tasks



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## Eight Acceleration Opportunity Levers™



### Process Lever

- Alter the project structure and the relationship of the elements to minimize process cycle time
- T&Ts<sup>1</sup>: Development models; Task collaboration; Front-end analysis
- Leader Issues: Political sensitivities; turf issues; task handoffs

### Planning Lever

- Incorporate means for project efficiencies to offset delays and inefficiencies; Also, account for special risks that accompany APs
- T&Ts: Buffer management; ETC alerts; Critical risk factors tracking
- Leader Issues: Fairness issues; latitude vs. control; setting expectations

### Policy Lever

- Removing (or working around) policies that inhibit accelerated projects
- T&Ts: Policy intent analysis; decision streamlining; dotted-line elimination
- Leader Issues: Political sensitivities; overcoming inertia; policy police

<sup>1</sup> T&Ts = a partial list of tools and techniques used to support this lever. Some T&Ts support more than 1 lever.

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## Eight Acceleration Opportunity Levers™

### People Lever

- Improving communications, coordination, and cooperation between project team members, also setting expectations for team performance
- T&Ts = Task collaboration analysis; Relating & Communicating Styles
- Leader Issues: Conflict intervention; conflicting priorities; communications

### Psychology Lever

- Improving the performance, productivity, and work habits of individuals
- T&Ts: TOS assessment; front-end loading; avoiding milestone paralysis
- Leader Issues: Energy management; conflicting task orientation styles

### Requirements

- Defining requirements and avoiding requirements-related problems
- T&Ts: Requirements mapping; avoiding Type-3 errors; CRIA analysis
- Leader Issues: Dealing with internal customers; avoiding scope creep

***Exercise:** Identify at least 4 types of requirements-related problems that can impede accelerated projects.*

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## Eight Acceleration Opportunity Levers™

### Technology Lever

- Taking advantage of technology tools to expedite planning and executing the project, especially tools that facilitate communications, coordination, and collaboration
- T&Ts: Best practices; work-product speed boosters (e.g., embedded sensors)
- Leader Issues: Reconciling strong differences of opinion between tech. experts; avoiding analysis paralysis; ensuring *sane* use of ICT devices

### Leadership Lever

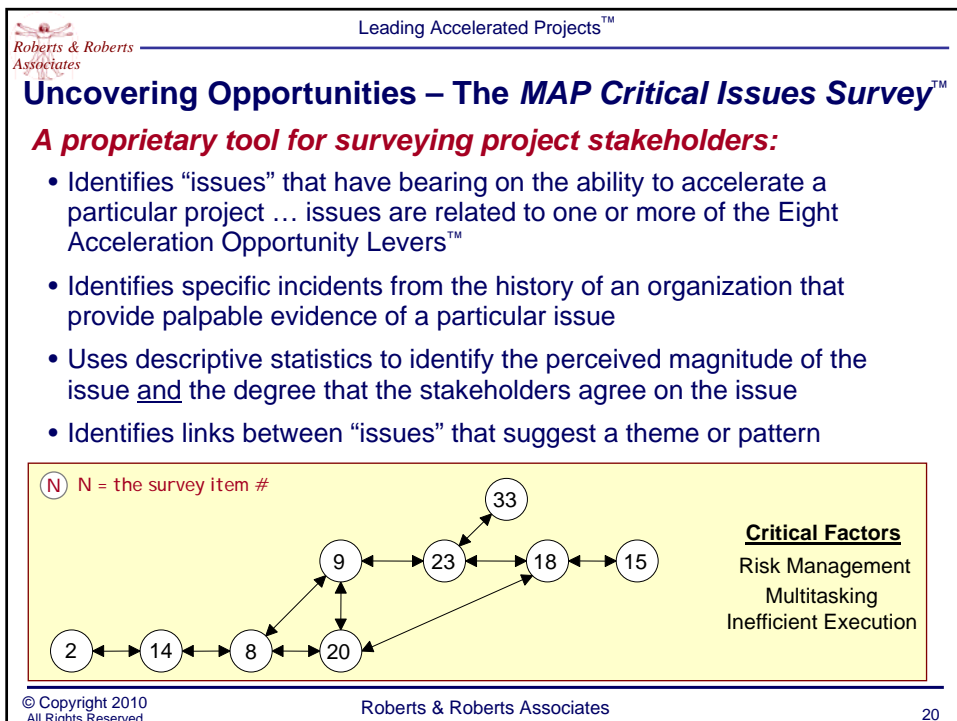
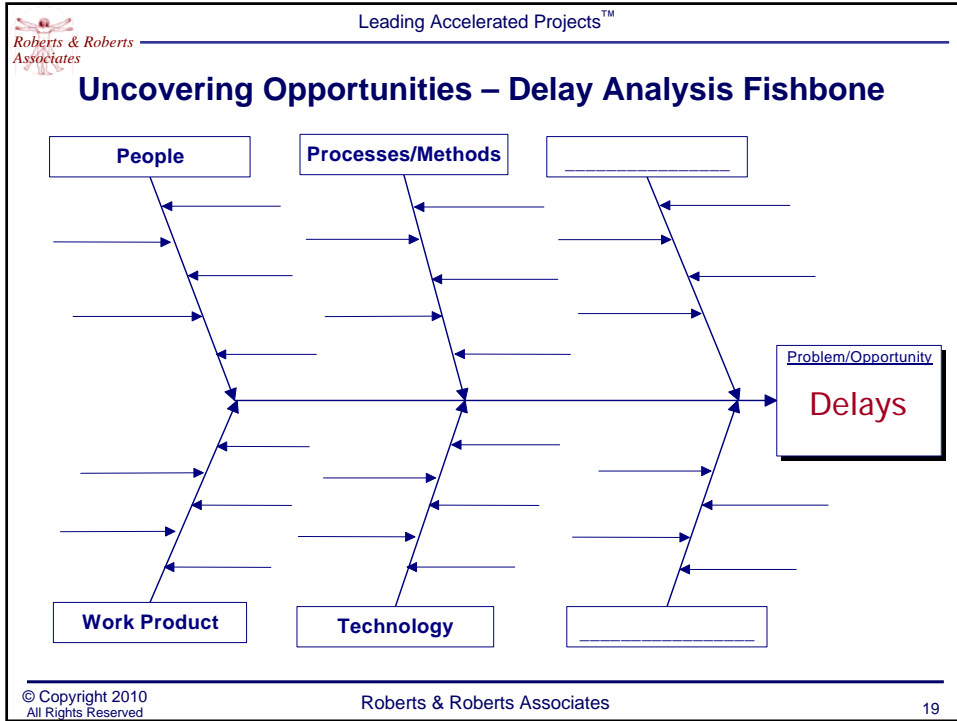
- Providing the motivating force behind the other 7 levers; executing the leader actions and interventions for accelerating the project; selecting the right leader for the job
- T&Ts: Dunker diagrams; AP strategy maps; force-field analysis; Monday Notes
- Leader Issues: *Executing* the plan but adapting to the circumstances; avoiding finger pointing; avoiding feature creep; quick and decisive action

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# Q&A

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## References and Recommended Reading

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*Organizational Communications Imperatives: Lessons of the Space Program*, Phillip K. Thompkins, Roxbury Publishing Co., 1993

*Re-Creating the Organization: A Design of Organizations for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*, Russell K. Ackoff, Oxford University Press, 1999

*Dirty Rotten Strategies*, Ian I. Mitroff and Abraham Silvers, Stanford Business Books, 2009

*PMBOK Guide® – Fourth Edition Changes*, Cyndi Snyder Stackpole, January 29, 2009

<h3><u>Training Courses</u></h3> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Leading Accelerated Projects</li><li>• Gleaning Facts From Figures</li><li>• SPC Workshop for Users</li><li>• Quantitative Tools for Project Managers</li><li>• Analytical Skills for Admin. Professionals</li></ul> <p>See descriptions at <a href="http://www.R2assoc.com/Trainp.htm">www.R2assoc.com/Trainp.htm</a></p>	 <h3><b>Roberts &amp; Roberts Associates</b></h3> <p>Lon Roberts, Ph.D.</p> <p><a href="http://www.R2assoc.com">www.R2assoc.com</a> <a href="mailto:info@R2assoc.com">info@R2assoc.com</a> 972.596.2956</p> 
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