

# Leading High-Performance Teams in High-Pressure Projects™



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## Objectives

- Heightened awareness of the human factors and processes (tangible and intangible) that are essential to *leading a high-performance project team in high pressure projects*
- Heeding important lessons from successful and unsuccessful projects, including exemplary project leaders
- Understanding the dynamic interplay between yourself, your project team, and the project leader
- Knowledge of how to use certain tools to improve communications, coordination, and collaboration within and between project teams

# Sample Charts

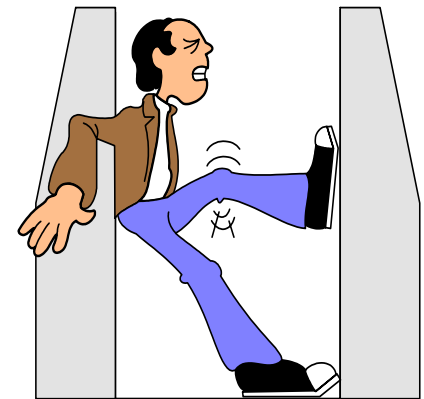
# Anatomy of a High-Pressure Project

## Pressure Conditions:

1. Time Constraints – “unrealistic” deadlines; tight timelines
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. Perceived Lack of Control – back to the wall with no support
4. \_\_\_\_\_

## Intensifying Factors:

- Risk/Uncertainty – *means-uncertainty* and *ends-uncertainty*
- Distributed project teams – communications disconnects
- Team “churn” and stakeholder turnover
- Resource starvation
- Egos and personality conflicts
- Technical challenges
- \_\_\_\_\_





# Special Challenges of High-Pressure Project

## Individual Challenges

- Extreme stress diminishes creativity and productivity

- \_\_\_\_\_



## Team Challenges:

- Overlapping tasks amplify the need for close collaboration

- \_\_\_\_\_

## Project Manager Challenges:

- Must be able to read and to adapt to current realities

- \_\_\_\_\_

- Must be willing and able to **lead** the project

## Seeds of Conflict

- High-pressure projects tend to amplify \_\_\_\_\_
- Excessive \_\_\_\_\_ can harm civility by diminishing awareness of others' sensitivities and missing subtle cues
- Differences in work styles and habits can hamper cooperation
- Requirements-ambiguity often creates rifts between teams and individuals who do not have \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_ fosters suspicion and lack of trust
- Communications problems in a variety of forms ... misreads, misstatements, disconnects, exaggerations, etc.

**But know this ...**

***Conflict does not require outward manifestation!***

# Lessons Learned About High-Performance Project Teams

Small teams = fewer \_\_\_\_\_

Voluntary participation of team members

Full-time team members = \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_

End-to-end project participation by team members

Report solely to the project leader ... no \_\_\_\_\_

Cross-functional representation from key areas

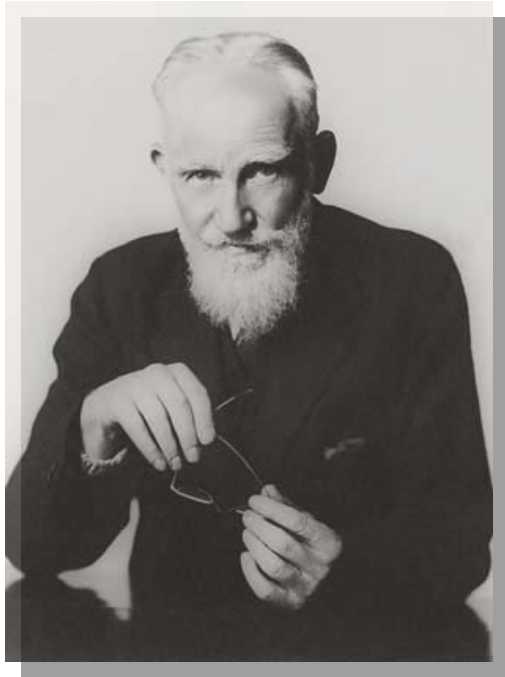
Co-location, if possible

Time and \_\_\_\_\_ management



## 10 Interventions of a Project Leader

1. Runs interference for the project team
2. Finds and utilizes workarounds when necessary
3. Removes barriers and roadblocks for the project team
4. Secures external support and resources for project team
5. Serves as \_\_\_\_\_ for the project
6. Ensures there are no disconnects in task handoffs
7. Vigilant to potential \_\_\_\_\_ and takes proactive measures to ward off \_\_\_\_\_
8. Doesn't wait to be told what's going on ... few surprises
9. Intervenes when conflict arises or \_\_\_\_\_
10. Follows the project plan, but adapts to \_\_\_\_\_

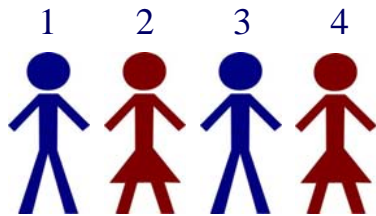


“The danger of communication is the illusion that it has been accomplished.”

— George Bernard Shaw, 1856- 1950  
1925 Nobel Prize in Literature

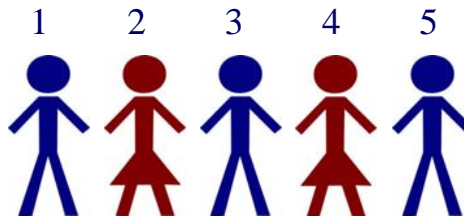
## And communication challenges increase nonlinearly as members are added to the team

If  $n = 4$ , the number of communications pairs = 6

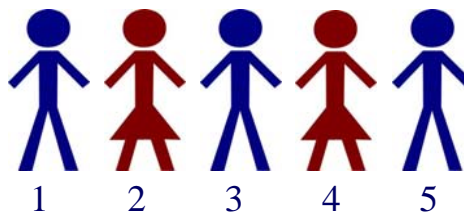
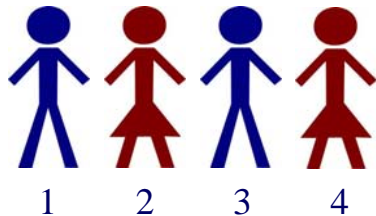


+ 1 =

If one person is added, the number of pairs = 10

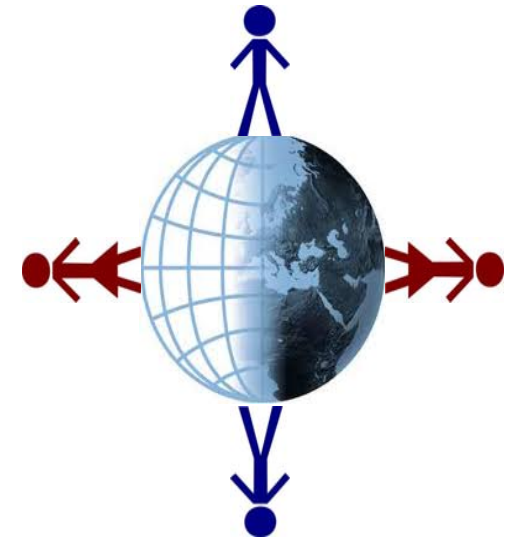


+ 1 =



... and the challenges are compounded with

*distributed project teams*



**For every person added to a team, the number of communications pairs increases by a factor of \_\_, where \_\_ is the team size before the addition**

# Common Negative Perceptions

## . . . *With PM Implications*

### Gen Y Perception of Boomers

- Too \_\_\_\_\_
- Too rigid – need order/structure
- Condescending
- Social media averse
- Technologically obsolete
- Not able to \_\_\_\_\_



### Baby Boomer Perception of Gen Y

- Risk takers
- \_\_\_\_\_, want no \_\_\_\_\_
- Impertinent, disrespect authority
- Expect \_\_\_\_\_
- Entitlement mentality
- Not tough minded – give up easily

# Example of a social media tool (Vyew) for collaborating at a distance

The screenshot displays the Vyew interface with a green header bar containing navigation buttons: MENU, INVITE, HOME, ROOM, and SCREEN SHARE. The main content area is titled "Data Visualization Techniques" and features a flowchart diagram. The flowchart starts with "Establish Selection Criteria", which branches into "Review local firms based on selection criteria" and "Pull together the selection team". Both of these lead to "Narrow the list to the best 3", which then leads to "Select the winning design firm", and finally to "Conduct 'Partnership Agreement' meeting with winning firm". On the right side, there is a webcam feed of a man in a red sweater, a "WEBCAM" label, and a list of 22 users online, including Dr. Roberts, Julliette, and Guest 1. A left sidebar contains editing tools like a mouse cursor, a pencil, and a text tool labeled 'A'.

# Task Collaboration in High-Pressure Projects

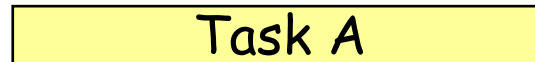
*What does it mean to go  
from this . . .*



Coordination



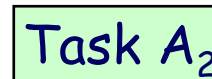
*To this?*



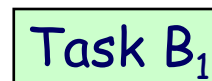
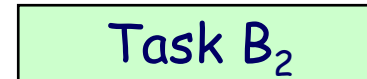
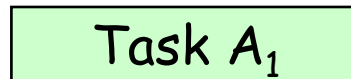
Coordination  
W/Concurrency



*Could it be this?*



Collaboration



Responsible Party: Test Engineer

Date/Phase

Responsible Party: Tech Writer

Pre-Test

Establish unit test conditions

12 Jun

Draft unit test scenarios

20 Jun

Review/revise test scenarios

23 Jun

26 Jun

Run unit tests

1 Jul

10 Jul

15 Jul

Format scenarios to standard

Add scenarios to system plan

Record results of unit tests

Add to test verification database

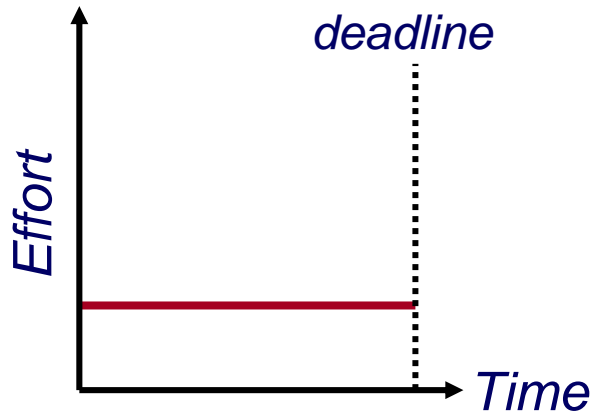
### Gantt Chart View of Overlapping Tasks

Plan & Execute System Tests

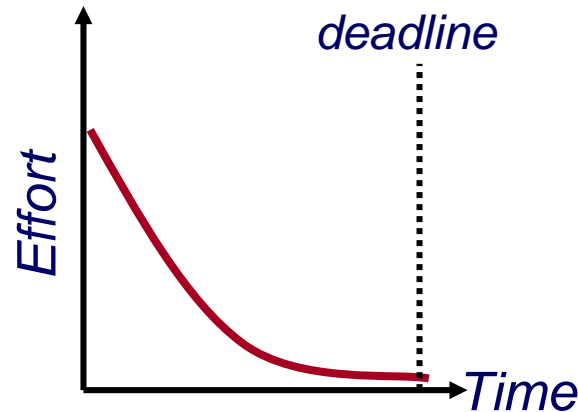
Document Test Plan & Results

# How Work Habits Affect Team Collaboration

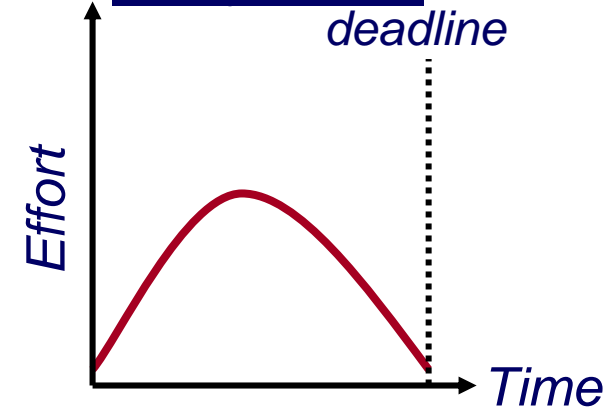
## ① Continuous



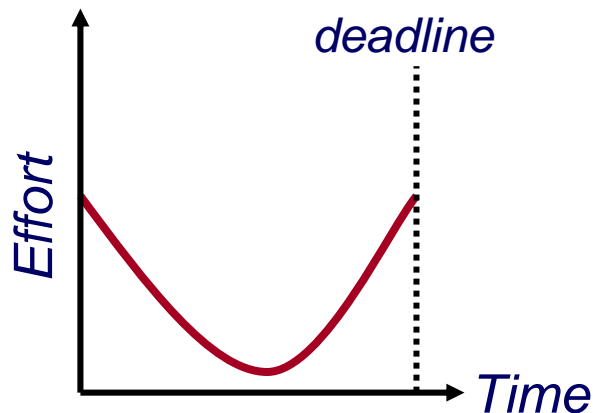
## ② Early Start, Early Finish



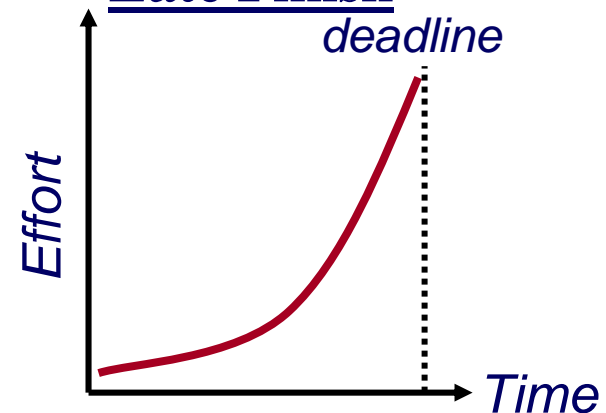
## ③ Late Start, Early Finish



## ④ Early Start, Late Finish



## ⑤ Late Start, Late Finish





## CRITICAL ASSUMPTIONS MATRIX

Project: Clean Room Expansion

Status as of: 30 October

Team: High-Efficiency Filtration & Ventilation

WBS Code(s): 4.0

Issue	Assumption	Critical (1-5)	Uncertainty (1-5)	Assigned To	Status/Resolution
Dust particulate specification	≤ 10 ppm is adequate	5	3	T.R.	Requires customer confirmation
Phase II funding	Funding will be available to commence Ph II	4	2	M.S.	Budget approval under review
Test results	≥ 90% success rate on 1 <sup>st</sup> test run	3	5	K.L.	Show as risk to schedule if < 90%

# Summary of Communications-Related Suggestions

For overlapping tasks, allow \_\_\_\_\_ to define the information that's needed from \_\_\_\_\_

Anticipate communications disconnects and \_\_\_\_\_

Avoid inundating the project team with \_\_\_\_\_

Avoid “spamming” your e-mail communications

Pay attention to “good practices” when using e-mail

Co-locate if possible, but if not, \_\_\_\_\_

Keep in mind that “communications” is a *construct* - ferret out and prevent the cause of specific communications problems

## References and Recommended Reading

- Process Reengineering: The Key to Achieving Breakthrough Success*, Lon Roberts, Quality Press, 1995.
- Egonomics*, David Marcum & Steven Smith, Fireside, 2007
- 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
- Breaking the Code of Project Management*, Alexander Laufer, Palgrave MacMillan, 2009
- Leading Accelerated Projects: Why Projects Overrun their Schedules and What to Do About It*, forthcoming book by Lon Roberts. Visit website at [www.R2assoc.com](http://www.R2assoc.com) for availability information.

### Training Courses

- Leading Accelerated Projects
- Gleaning Facts From Figures
- SPC Workshop for Users
- Quantitative Tools for Project Managers
- Analytical Skills for Admin. Professionals

See descriptions at  
[www.R2assoc.com/Trainp.htm](http://www.R2assoc.com/Trainp.htm)



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