



EmpowerChangeNow Newsletter

Life Transformations, LLC. – *empowering change*

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Life Transformations was

founded in 2003 by Joanne Aaronson. Joanne's mission is to foster



empowerment in the individual to achieve his/her ideal life including relationships, career, and financial situation. Or for the executive, to achieve Enlightened Leadership to empower their best organization possible. The [Empower Change Now Newsletter](#) was started in 2007 to support this mission by sharing information about the underlying paradigm shift necessary to empower change in the individual for unlimited possibilities.

Dear Readers,

Avoiding project failure is of foremost concern for project managers. Check out this month's articles to understand how creativity and planning fit into the mix to avoid project failure while aiding project success. As usual, I welcome your comments or experiences with this material.

Always in light, Joanne

Creativity as a Cure for Project Failure

Project managers are called upon consistently to solve problems, make decisions and deal with risks as a necessary and critical role on projects. One key aspect of making good decisions is the understanding that it's important to make use of both sides of our brains. Let me explain. By nature, most project managers are more left-brained or analytical, logical thinkers. Thus, a detailed, careful analysis of a situation is a more comfortable approach to decision making. However, more often than not, project environments involve fast moving "fires" that must be handled to mitigate risk. Things are moving too quickly to do a careful analysis using specific variables, weight averages and/or pros/cons (left-brain). In these scenarios, a faster, more intuitive (or creative) decision (right- brain) may be called for.

What are some examples of when to allow your right brain creative flow to solve problems on your projects?

One answer is anytime you want to keep your stakeholders flexible. There is no recipe for stakeholder management since every person is an individual requiring specific communication skills to handle, yet an inner knowing to "get" in order to facilitate relationship with them. Without relationship, the individual won't be on your side when the going gets rough.

I once was asked to manage a deliverable due over a holiday. One evening I came upon an engineering manager pouring over a book. Thinking he was studying, I inquired about the subject. He replied that he was looking for the answer to a problem on which his team was working. I suggested he take a walk to establish his creative flow. The next day he told me how successful his walk had been and thanked me for providing the idea. When the time came for me to begin to request deliverable information, he was the first one**Cont'd Page 3**

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Planning for Change

When we consider project failure, what cause comes to mind most often? Certainly one probable answer is a stalemate between the original project objectives, the expectations of the executive sponsors, and the situational reality of the project environment. In other words, the project manager as owner of the triple constraint (scope, cost and schedule) must constantly juggle the needs of all stakeholders with what the team can actually accomplish in a specific period of time. Predictions don't always match the real world. Risks may materialize; team members may leave; equipment costs can be more than the projected budget, etc. What to do when the world won't cooperate with the project plan?

Even after twenty years of project management experience, I've learned that the only constant is "change". So get used to it! Planning for change is the best way to manage a project. Assuming that you will establish a plan, a budget and it won't change is a road to disaster. Thus, setting stakeholder expectations upfront is a critical step to successful project management.

What's the best way to get stakeholders to understand the realistic picture of the project environment upfront? Industry best practice is to use a charter document signed by executive sponsors indicating their buy-in during the project initiation phase.

The charter should include the following key project-specific items:

- ◆ A clear and concise mission statement
- ◆ The major business goals indicating relevance to the organization
- ◆ The initial budget tied back to the prior item
- ◆ The main high level deliverables
- ◆ The initial delivery schedule
- ◆ And, most importantly, any key risks to accomplishing the project

Getting your stakeholders to first agree on the above items during a series of meetings and then signing off on the charter is a great way to plan for the success of your project. I've found that when the known risks materialize, usually there are mitigations that have also been discussed, thus stakeholders are more likely to cooperate. Expectations are a funny thing. Get them under control in the beginning of your project to properly manage for change.



Remember:

- ◆ **Change is the only constant**
- ◆ **Become comfortable with change**
- ◆ **Use a charter for buy-in**

Events and Happenings

Joanne spoke for the Washington DC Chapter of the Project Management Institute on February 15. The tool's session presentation prior to the dinner meeting was "Creative Techniques for Project Success".

See details at www.empowerchangenow.com or 703-624-0130 for questions.





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Want to know more?

We're on the web:

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Balance Your Life Corner

Joanne's Berry-good Dessert

Wake up your winter taste buds with this light, healthy berry dessert that's rich in anti-oxidants, low in calories and tasty to boot. Mix readily available blueberries, blackberries and/or strawberries with slices of banana in a large martini glass or other serving dish.



Top with a warmed mixture of fruit jam and a tsp of vanilla extract. Pour the flavored sauce over the fruit and enjoy!

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in line asking me how he could be of service. The few minutes I tried to help him paid off greatly since his group provided their input to my deliverable right on time making my job that much easier. This is just one story of how using my own creativity helped to keep a stakeholder flexible and had a huge payoff.

Other examples are when stakeholders insist on a scope that includes more than can be stuffed into the project "bag" or into the project budget or into the project schedule. In other words, issues with the triple constraint. Using one's creativity can keep stakeholders flexible to maintain the flow of the project and not have projects failure. Here are some tips to handle similar situations:

1. Suggest alternatives for win-win situations (rather than providing all 150 requirements in a one year timeframe, try a phased approach wherein 50 are delivered every 6 months, allowing for a pilot with a more confirmed customer acceptance, better QA and even time for adjustment of goals)
2. Meet with the loudest stakeholder to determine their motives (sometimes this individual just wants to be heard and setting up a specific meeting to allow for them to air their feelings will often get the real issues on the table)
3. If money is an issue, figure out how to tie your project to the organization's key objectives so that not doing it is unfathomable! In the end, using creativity is a great cure for project failure as it keeps the options open. Otherwise, projects fail when there are no more options.

