Take It to the Top – Done Right, Escalations Are Nothing to be Afraid of

By Neal Whitten, PMP
Disagreement on projects is common—and it can even be beneficial, as both parties seek the best business outcome. However, when conflict resolution drifts and a person waits too long to escalate a problem or, worse, fails to do so altogether, the organisation suffers.

Although none of these are acceptable excuses, the person may fear conflict or worry about burning a bridge, losing or looking bad. Or, they may be unsure of what's considered acceptable behaviour.

Yet if handled properly, calling upon higher levels of project leadership or management is a healthy and essential part of any business.

Escalations:

- Provide a check-and-balance mechanism to help ensure proper action
- Resolve problems early
- Help reduce frustration among project members
- Improve overall productivity by reducing rework
- Help prioritise work activities
- Encourage employee participation and problem ownership

When the Time Is Right

Escalations can be a powerful tool, but team members and organisations should follow a few guidelines:

1. **Escalate only after a sincere attempt has been made to resolve the issue.** Escalation is not an excuse to avoid confronting someone. In most cases, the involved parties can reach an agreement and escalation won't be necessary.

2. **The dissenter typically is responsible for escalating the issue.** The exception is if the other party doesn't have approval over your work.

3. **Initiate the escalation within two workdays of knowing the problem is unresolvable at its current level.** It may be difficult to schedule immediate meetings with executives, but at least book time on their calendars.

4. **Escalate the problem, not the person.** Don't make the disagreement personal—it's business. Typically, neither party is wrong. Each is championing a position from their perspective, as they should.

5. **Inform your manager prior to initiating an escalation.** If you're uncertain about the escalation process, confer with your manager or project sponsor. Make them aware of your intent. They may be able to help you in preparing your position, or they may wish to attend. If management doesn't support your position, however, be prepared that you might be directed to hold off.

6. **Inform other involved parties beforehand as well.** You want all parties prepared to ensure the escalation meeting is productive and focused on facts.

7. **While the escalation is underway, don't stop working the plan of record.** No one can predict for certain the outcome of an escalation, so it's best to keep everyone marching together until an official decision has been made.

Up, Up and Away

Once an escalation is underway, how do you know how far up the management chain to take it? Continue escalating an issue until one of these conditions occurs:

- You obtain an acceptable resolution
- The head of both dissenting parties reaches a decision
- Your boss or a manager directly up your management chain directs you to cease escalating
- A decision is made by the project sponsor

As a leader of a project, programme or organisation, it's your job to ensure the people you depend on understand the business and mechanics of escalating. The process should be documented and appropriately taught.

Organisations can't avoid disagreements, but escalations can transform them into something productive.
Neal Whitten, PMP, president of The Neal Whitten Group, is a speaker, trainer, consultant and mentor. He is also the author of Neal Whitten’s *No-Nonsense Advice for Successful Projects*.

**Project Management Highlights**

**India’s Larsen & Toubro Gets US$260 Million Water, Metals Contract**

Indian infrastructure company Larsen & Toubro said recently that it has been awarded contracts worth US$260 million for its metallurgical and water operating division from Tata Steel Limited.

The project will be implemented through a joint venture between Tata Steel and the Japanese firm, Nippon Steel Corp for producing high-grade cold rolled steel sheet for automotive application.

*This article was first published in Asia Pulse on 31 December 2010.*

The full text is available through PM Port®. PM Port helps you keep in touch with your profession through PMI’s online global news service powered by LexisNexis.

**DB and China to Cooperate More Closely in Rail Freight Transport and Infrastructure Projects**

Passenger transport and logistics group Deutsche Bahn and the Chinese Ministry of Railways want to cooperate more closely in rail freight transport and in expanding the Chinese rail infrastructure. In a joint declaration, both parties confirmed their intent to strengthen rail freight transport and to step up the establishment of new transports between Asia and Europe. In 2010, DB International submitted the winning bid in five other construction supervision projects for nine high-speed routes in China. The total contract volume is around 30 million euros.

*This article was first published in the Technology Business Journal on 21 December 2010.*

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**What’s New**

**PMI Professional Awards Add Distinction to Your Accomplishments**

Each year, PMI honours those who do an outstanding job advancing the knowledge and practice of project management through its Professional Awards...
Conferred for outstanding contributions to the development and advancement of the project management profession and contributions to the Institute, the PMI Linn Stuckenbruck Person of the Year Award is among the most prestigious honours a project manager can receive.

Recognise a fellow PMI member for his or her outstanding contributions, or talk to your PMI colleagues about your interest in being nominated for the 2011 PMI Linn Stuckenbruck Person of the Year Award.

Act now – nominations for this and many other PMI Professional Awards must arrive at PMI via postal mail by Friday, 1 April.

The PMI Linn Stuckenbruck Person of the Year Award is presented at the annual PMI awards ceremony and reception during PMI® Global Congress – North America. This year, the PMI Awards Ceremony and reception will be held on 22 October at the Gaylord Texan Resort & Convention Center in Dallas/Fort Worth, Texas, USA.

Add distinction to your curriculum vitae, or recognise a fellow PMI member for his or her outstanding contributions. Visit PMI.org/Awards for information on how to nominate.

Contact Ms. Donna Huber, PMI Awards Administrator, awards@pmi.org | +1 610 356 4600, x7088 with questions or for more information.

PM Network App Launched for iPad, iPhone and iPod Touch

In keeping with PMI’s commitment to delivering value to our members, the PMI publications team and digital publications provider, Texterity, has developed a PM Network® app for the iPad, iPhone and iPod Touch.

Beginning with the November 2010 issue, full magazine content is accessible to PMI members by downloading the PM Network app from Apple’s App Store.

PMI members will be prompted to enter their PMI.org username and password in order to access the magazine content.

The PM Network app provides members with access to current and archived issues of the magazine with the same functionality found in the magazine’s digital edition. This functionality includes: increased portability, active web links on content and advertising, user-configured navigation and page views, advanced search features and more.

If you have a PMI.org username and password, and own an iPad, iPhone or iPod Touch, we invite you to download and use the PM Network app.

Purchase Successful Project Management Practices at the PMI Marketplace!
Successful Project Management Practices

Parviz F. Rad, Vittal S. Anantatmula

This book describes the attributes, procedures and policies that reflect sophisticated organisations. The main theme is the notion that project management success is attributed to three major components: skilled individuals, productive teams and a project-friendly enterprise. The integrative and multi-faceted approach that enterprises must take to achieve success in project management is emphasised.

Features:

- The importance of project management sophistication and the concept of the project management office.
- The three key components of enterprise project management success.
- Using checklists and simple diagrams, this book is extremely easy to read and full of tips and examples.
- Project managers in all industries can benefit from this book.

Upcoming Event Highlights

PMI Pakistan Chapter—PMI National Project Management Conference Pakistan 2011

Three PMI chapters in Pakistan are joining together to conduct the first PMI National Project Management Conference Pakistan. The conference, themed “Making Project Management Work for Pakistan”, is being organised by the PMI Lahore, Pakistan Chapter and supported by the PMI Islamabad, Pakistan Chapter and the PMI Karachi, Pakistan Chapter.

This conference highlights the important role of project management in improving the capabilities of public- and private-sector organisations to successfully plan and execute their projects. It will also provide a unique opportunity for decision-makers from all sectors to interact with leading project management practitioners and academicians.

The two-day event will bring together top project management experts from the industry, government and academia to share their knowledge and experience in creating value through project management. Topics covered will include portfolio, programme and project management, industry perspective, the latest project management tools and case studies.

You can expand your knowledge and earn 12 PDUs at the same time. Plan to attend now.

PMI Pakistan Chapter—PMI National Project Management Conference Pakistan 2011

Date: 9–10 April 2011
Time: 9.00 a.m. to 5.00 p.m.
Venue: Holiday Inn Hotel, Lahore, Pakistan
Website: http://www.pmilhr.org.pk
Contact: coordinator@pmilhr.org.pk
Online Registration: http://www.esapps.biz/pmi
PMI New Zealand Chapter—17th Project Management Conference 2011

PMI New Zealand Chapter (PMINZ) is proud to announce and host the 17th Project Management Conference in Auckland, New Zealand, home to the 2011 Rugby World Cup.

The conference themed “Innovate To Succeed” will be held from 5–7 July, 2011 at the five-star Langham Hotel in Auckland. PMI President and CEO, Mr. Mark Langley, will be the keynote speaker for the conference.

Innovation is a key driver for project success in these challenging economic times. It is about achieving results by being creative, competitive, collaborative and thinking outside the box.

You are invited to explore the creative aspects of project management and learn how you can reinvent and improvise skills to pave your way to success.

The PMINZ conference is a platform for professionals to gather together and share knowledge, experience and professional camaraderie. Learn ways to introduce innovative project management approaches through exciting topics, master classes and interactive breakout sessions. Share viewpoints and ideas through networking opportunities.

All are welcome to be part of the 2011 conference as delegates, presenters, sponsors or exhibitors.

Contact us now to ensure you get the greatest opportunity to participate in New Zealand's premier project management event for 2011. The Conference 2011 team can be contacted by e-mailing to conf2011@pmi.org.nz

Visit our website www.pminzconference.com for more information.

Community Updates

PMI Pearl City, Hyderabad Chapter Celebrates International Student Leadership Day

On 3 February 2011, a mammoth gathering of India’s future stakeholders celebrated the International Student Leadership Day (ISLD) at Shilpakala Vedika, Hyderabad, India. The 2,000 participants comprised of over 1,700 students, teachers, academicians, parents, corporate leaders and PMI Pearl City, Hyderabad Chapter (PMIPCC) volunteers.
Over 1,700 of India’s future stakeholders gathered in celebration of International Student Leadership Day

What began as a dream of the chapter’s founding members, notably Mr. V. Srinavasa Rao, past president of PMIPCC and past chairman of PMI Team India and Mr. Suresh Chandra, president of PMIPCC has been incorporated as part of the chapter’s academia initiative, culminating the Student Leadership Competency Building (SCLB) programme’s year-long activities with the conference.

Mr. Suresh Chandra outlined the plans for building an ecosystem to thousands while Mr. Rao ignited the spark in them through his talk and led the pledge-taking ceremony. The event also had eminent speakers such as Prof. VH Iyer, Dean, Welingkar University, Pune and a panel discussion on “Building Industry Ready & Nation Ready Leaders from Academia - Challenges & Solutions” with Dr. Lakshminarayana, IAS from the Department of Technical Education, Government of Andhra Pradesh, Mr. Velury Pardhasaradhy, EVP, HR, Indu Projects and Mr. Pratap Reddy, Chairman, Dhruva College of Management.

Creative representations on leadership were also showcased by the students in innovative ways through skits and dances. The valedictory was provided by Mr. Sathya Venkatesh P., Director, ISLD who thanked the guests, volunteers and sponsors in making the event a success.

Past Events

PMI Region 11 Leadership Meeting

Held in Mumbai, India, 18–19 November 2010, the PMI Region 11 Leadership Meeting was hosted by PMI Region Mentor, Ramam Atmakuri, PMP and attended by 44 chapter leaders from India, Sri Lanka and Bangladesh and PMI colleagues from the Asia Pacific Service Centre and India. The format of this unique event was similar to PMI Leadership Institute Meetings (LIIM).

Chapter Presidents Tejas Sura, PMP (Mumbai) and Suresh Chandra, PMP (Pearl City, Hyderabad) spoke on "Chapter Governance" and "Collaboration with Academia, Industry and Government" respectively. Topics covered by invited speakers included:

- Achieving Personal Excellence,
- Volunteer Management, and
- Build Your Interpersonal Competency.

Raj Kalady, managing director of PMI India shared his team’s 2010 achievements. A good example was the strong collaborations between PMI India and local chapters for a very successful PMI India Project Management Conference with excellent volunteer support and minimal outsourcing.
PMI Vice President of Brand Management, Lesley Bakker also hosted a “Leader to Leader” discussion with former PMI President and CEO Gregory Balestrero and PMI Board Member Vijay Prasad on topics ranging from global strategies to country-specific plans targeted at Western Asia.

Mr. Balestrero stressed the importance of membership retention across all of PMI and suggested communication methods on the value of PMI membership. He also emphasised the chapters’ significant role in recruiting new members.

It was an enriching experience for all participants at the Region 11 Leadership Meeting. Chapter leaders exchanged ideas through interactive networking sessions. Encouraged by the positive feedback, the region can now look forward to an annual meeting.

Chapter leaders with former PMI President and CEO Gregory Balestrero

There are 50,336 members in the PMI Asia Pacific region as of January 2011, representing over 14 percent of total PMI membership.

There are currently 276 R.E.P. organisations enrolled in the PMI R.E.P. Programme in the Asia Pacific

Welcome New R.E.P.s in Asia Pacific:
- Valtes Co., Ltd. – Japan http://www.valtes.co.jp
- Guangzhou Canway Technology Consulting Co. Ltd – China, Mainland http://www.canway.net
- Cisco Systems Services BV – India http://www.cisco.com
- PT. Talenta Prime Resources – Indonesia http://www.talentaresources.com
- Xiamen Winnow Management Consultation Co., Ltd. – China, Mainland http://www.peiin.com

There are currently 276 R.E.P. organisations enrolled in the PMI R.E.P. Programme in the Asia Pacific
Registered Education Providers (R.E.P.s) are organisations approved by PMI to offer project management training for professional development units (PDUs) to maintain your PMI credentials.

View the R.E.P. web pages on PMI.org to learn more about R.E.P.s or log in to the new CCR System to find a provider of project management education activities and products in your country.

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**Asia Pacific Calendar**

**Events**

If you are organising a PMI event in the Asia Pacific region and would like us to list it in the e-Link, please contact SoHyun Kang.

- **9–10 April**
  - PMI Pakistan Chapter—PMI National Project Management Conference Pakistan 2011

- **5–7 July**
  - PMI New Zealand Chapter—17th Project Management Conference 2011

**Examination**

PMI’s certification programme is an internationally recognised, globally accredited programme that is transferable between methodologies, standards and industries; applies valid and reliable ways to assess competence, and is designed by project managers for project managers.

All candidates for Project Management Professional (PMP)®, Certified Associate in Project Management (CAPM)®, Program Management Professional (PgMP)®, PMI Scheduling Professional (PMI-SP)®, and PMI Risk Management Professional (PMI-RMP)® must first meet specific educational and experience requirements and then pass an examination.

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**Asia Pacific Regional Service Centre**

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The Asia Pacific Service Centre is open Monday through Friday, 9:00 a.m. – 6:00 p.m., Singapore time (GMT +8).

The Asia Pacific Service Centre will be closed on the following dates due to public holidays in Singapore:

- **22 April 2011** – Good Friday
- **2 May 2011** – Labour Day

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