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Take the Initiative to Make Things Better



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Our world is in constant change! And that's not always an easy thing. We all have challenges presented to us in life, both personally and in the work environment. And although everyone would like to have absolutely no little bumps in the road, we all know that we will... and we do! Taking the initiative to make things better is at the heart of a leader's job. If it is to be, it is up to me.

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Initiative can mean taking action to prevent or head off a potential problem, take action to rectify an undesired situation, or take action to turn something that's just okay into something really great! But this action is more than just avoiding crises or fixing problems; it's continually looking for ways to make improvements, minimize risk, react to changing environments, and constantly taking steps to improve all aspects of our lives and the domain of our work-related responsibilities.

Action for a Project Management professional could be the introduction of a new process, system efficiency, a unique way to recognize positive performance or reinforce the synergy of a cohesive team – it can be almost anything to make improvements for you personally, and for your teams, projects, and organization. It is up to you, to continually act. Positive initiative to make things better is sending a message to those around you – it says you value positive action and contributions. And your actions will encourage others to do the same.

- Deal with potential issues as early as possible

- Don't ignore the early warning signs
- Address them while damage is small and solutions most manageable
- Step out and take responsibility
 - Continually look for ways to improve
 - See an opportunity – take action

Don't wait for someone else to do something when you are truly in the best spot to make a difference. Neal Whitten, PMP and president of The Neal Whitten Group, is a speaker, trainer, consultant, mentor and author of several books. His September 2012 Mini-Newsletter included a link to excerpts from his book, *Neal Whitten's Let's Talk; More No-Nonsense Advice for Project Success—Over 700 Q&A's!* And this is where I found these ten 2-letter words that are so very powerful: **"If it is to be, it is up to me."** He was answering a question on a completely different topic, regarding accountability and the management of commitments. However, these words struck a powerful cord in me regarding my responsibility to make a difference in my own life and career. I'm pleased to share this with you, and look forward to seeing you at our next PMI-NNV meeting or event!

Carmen Jones

PMI-NNV President

Monthly Dinner Meeting

Use of a Turtle Diagram in Managing Project Quality

Understanding the process inputs, controllers, mechanisms, and output (PICMO) for any project is critical to meeting customer and stakeholder expectations. By looking at each of the components of the process or project, and associated controls, you can effectively manage project quality. Project Management requires many different skills, and one that is frequently taken for granted is the knowledge of quality systems and controls that are a foundation for success. Process repeatability, qualification of personnel, understanding the requirements, and process checks are all part of the foundation that helps to yield consistent results. Our speaker, Lorri Williams, from General Electric will describe the components of a Turtle Diagram, and how it relates to project management for virtually any industry. The Turtle Diagram is a cross between the PMBOK input-process-output diagram and a cause-and-effect diagram, and focuses on how



the process satisfies the customer. By looking at what is really happening vs. what procedures say is supposed to happen, a Project Manager can evaluate whether the approach is effective in meeting the customer's requirements.



Lorri Williams, GE's Energy Management Audit Program Manager, has over 25 years experience in quality management and associated disciplines. Lorri has held a variety of roles in her professional career including Manufacturing Engineer, Quality Engineer, Quality Manager, Six Sigma Master Black-Belt, Purchasing Manager, Product Line Leader and Finance project leader. Lorri has a BS in Industrial Technology from Cal Poly State University, an MBA from University of Phoenix Reno campus, and holds a variety of quality certifications through the American Society of Quality.

Meeting Time and Location

The presentation is scheduled for the October 23 meeting of the Project Management Institute's Northern Nevada Chapter. It will be held at Firkin & Wolf restaurant (13971 S. Virginia St in the Sierra Summit Mall, Reno). Networking begins at 5:30pm, dinner and announcements begin at 6:15pm, and the presentation begins at 7:00pm. The charge for dinner and presentation is \$25 (\$20 members); \$10 (\$5 members) for the presentation only. Register on-line at <http://www.pmi-nnv.org/>. One PDU can be earned for attending. Additional information can be obtained from Wynnlee Crisp, NNV PMI Program Director, (425) 681-7887.

Monthly Lunch Meetings

In addition to the PMI-NNV monthly evening meetings, we will continue having two lunch time meetings so that you may attend the location most convenient for you. The format will be the same for all lunch meetings: relaxed with lots of discussion about real-life experiences in project management.

October - Relationship Management

October 9th

Our monthly Carson City lunch forum will be held every 2nd Tuesday of every month at High Sierra Brewing Company at 11:30 to 1:00pm.

October 16th

Our monthly Reno lunch forum will be held every 3rd Tuesday of every month at Firkin & Wolf at 11:30 to 1:00.

How Can We Help?

It's Strategic Planning Time and Your Member Services Team would like to hear from YOU!

What should we focus on this year? How can we make your membership with PMI more valuable? Are there new services you would like to see our chapter provide? Send me an eMail and share your thoughts: VP-MemberServices@pmi-nnv.org

We have toyed with new member orientation in the past, job seeker workshops, and other small initiatives that just weren't well attended to be honest. So help us devise programs which would be of interest..or tell us we are doing fine with the Status Quo. We really appreciate your guidance as we set our goals for 2013.

Change is Inevitable



(Courtesy of Kevin Ciccotti, CPCC, ACC www.humanfactorformula.com)

Change is fun, isn't it? For most of us, the answer tends to be a rather firm, "No."

To that point, I just spent the last six months completely changing the face of the business I've spent the last 4 ½ years building. I can tell you; at times it's been anything but fun!

You see, I too, face the uncertainty of change – and the resistance and fear that it can produce.

And yet we know that change is inevitable. In fact, as many of you reading this are Project Managers, your career is built on a foundation of change.

So why do we resist?

"The key to success is often the ability to adapt."

By its nature uncertainty challenges us – it pushes us from our comfort zone,

and invites us to experience something new and unique. It doesn't sound all that bad. That is, until our brains get involved.

The thing is, as human beings we are wired to seek certainty. Not sure about that? How often do you drive a different route to work? Or how often do you deviate from your morning routine? See what I'm getting at now?

The thing about our wonderful brains is that they are like prediction machines. The only problem is that the connections they make are not always linear, connected, or relevant to what we're experiencing.

And that doesn't stop us from doing it!

Have you ever rented a movie you've already seen? Get a life!

In truth, you did that because you're certain you'll like it! And, you hope that you've forgotten enough about it to get just a little uncertainty and surprise. We're so predictable and funny, when you get right down to it.

"Life is change, growth is optional. Choose wisely."

In "Your Brain at Work," author David Rock points out our brain's propensity for making predictions. He notes how the brain literally craves certainty, using its huge data capacity for recognizing patterns in the world in order to predict outcomes. He says that when the need for certainty is met, there can even be a sensation of reward.

But, the more routine the event, the less noticeable the reward.

Now, apply this to your projects – vast, complex, long-term projects with absolutely uncertain outcomes. How does it make you feel just to think about that? Do you notice any response in your body?

How often have you fallen prey to the uncertainty that comes with leading your project teams? When faced with a situation that you cannot see a solution to, how often do you write the story before it even happens? More importantly, does that story tend to be positive or negative?

I've seen it (and yes, done it) so many times, and nowadays it just makes me chuckle at our need to control the outcome of events – sometimes as if our lives depended on it. That's because the brain literally sees uncertainty as a threat to your life.

"Growth means change and change involves risk, stepping from the known to the unknown."

As Rock puts it, "When you can't predict the outcome of a situation, an alert goes to the brain to pay more attention. An overall away response occurs. A 2005 study found that just a little ambiguity in its own lights up the amygdale."

The amygdale is part of the limbic system, which controls the release of neurotransmitters that stimulate emotional responses, and severely inhibit the brain's ability to think logically – typically leading to mistakes. Isn't that just great?

So am I saying that any time you experience uncertainty you're doomed to being reduced to a quivering, emotional mess? Not at all.

The trick is to stop the emotional response before it begins. One of the best ways to do that is to simply know that you're going to encounter uncertainty, and be okay with it. Ask yourself what's more important, knowing how every little detail is going to turn out, or having the emotional fitness to lead your project team to success?

"People underestimate their capacity for change. There is never a right time to do a difficult thing. A leader's job is to help people to have vision of their potential."

Practice living with a little uncertainty every day. Drive a different route to work. (Some of you are already shaking!) Eat something different for breakfast. Begin to change up your routine.

Like anything else, the ability to welcome more uncertainty into your life takes practice. In the end, like so many other things in our lives, it comes down to choice. You can choose to value certainty over uncertainty, fear over calm, mistakes over clear thinking, and ultimately failure over success. I don't know about you, but to me the choice is very clear.

And who knows? You might just be surprised by the outcome!

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