

## Where to With Project Management?

I invite you to take a moment to sit and reflect on where project management is heading. Project Management was established in the 1950's as a discipline to address massive work that needed to be organised and managed, with scheduling techniques being the primary tool supporting the process. Subsequent decade's saw quality management, risk management, stakeholder management and other practices, developed and incorporated into project management. Project management was lifted from being a discipline towards being recognised as a profession.

Traditional project management practices focus on delivering scope on time and within budget and fit within the sociological concept of *Achievement* (or *Competency*) *Consciousness* (Wade, 1996). As part of normal human development, when we are around the age of 13 we enter a stage of consciousness where we become aware of competence, composed of achievement and relationship. Western boys tend to strongly focus on achievement. Western girls are a little more interested in relationships, but still strongly driven by the culture on achievement. Eastern boys and girls are more oriented to relationships. Sociological theory suggests that when we master the spectrum, fully incorporating achievement and relationship into our practices, a new level of consciousness and way of being opens up, *Authentic Consciousness*. The way in which we function at that level is wholly different to how we are under Competency Consciousness. Stakeholder



*Time to sip and reflect: where to with Project Management?*

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### Abstract

*Sociology suggests that as we mature as individuals beyond Achievement Consciousness we develop into Authentic Consciousness. As a discipline, I suggest, project management needs to develop to new philosophical approach to take us into the future with greater effectiveness.*

### Keywords

Philosophy, project management

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Management is an achievement-oriented attempt to deal with relationships, but its purpose is more about achieving than the realism and authenticity of being in relationship.

At the moment there is a lot of energy around the implementation and use of Agile project management. Agile methods are a welcome and positive advancement in project management. Agile extends our mastery of *Competency Consciousness* towards real relationships, seeking to deliver early value using small activity increments, and staying connected with the ever-changing needs of stakeholders and the project environment. However, it is still achievement-oriented in nature, another way and hopefully better way of dealing with relationships in a project context.

Each new advance feels like a relief in terms of insight and addressing issues. However, I look forward to relationships being genuinely considered, and authenticity and honesty existing, in delivering projects, including:

- Working openly and fully with contributing, receiving and affected stakeholders;
- Within and between teams, with the culture, values and way of being with each other holding as much value as the outputs;
- Communication between senior management and the project manager and team being a true two-way exchange driven by mutual respect and interest;
- Effective partnering with suppliers and other external parties.

These qualities do exist within environments where an organisation recognises the value of full engagement and high trust, but they are the exception. Agile as a practice cannot work effectively unless there is a real shift in attitude and approach, and that is a small step towards what I see as the real change in approach that needs to take place. Agile does attend to relationships more fully than has generally been the case to date. It has limited efficacy in environments where management are in the old paradigm of delivering scope within strict time and cost boundaries. It works best at providing incremental value to stakeholders within small delivery cycles that respond to the dynamically changing environment. Nothing kills success quicker than applying old rules

to new practices. Rigid control must change to allow a new way to emerge. All of this is part of opening to a new level of consciousness and genuinely engaging with a way of being that produces outstanding results. Authentic relationship is counter to the traditional command and control approach, requires change in attitudes and behaviours across organisations, and holds important keys to unlocking performance across teams and organisations.

Achievement orientation fosters competition. Collaboration tends to lead to creative problem solving and rich solutions. Both are important. High trust and engagement enables ideas to flow, innovation to emerge, and creativity to expand. Sitting with me, as I drink my coffee, is the question “How can we unleash and apply the full potential of everyone involved in creating solutions?”

## Reference

Wade, J. (1996). *Changes of Mind: A Holonomic Theory of the Evolution of Consciousness*. USA: State University of New York Press.