## Making Emotional Conversations Unemotional

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#### Agenda

- 1. What Causes Emotional Conversations?
- 2. The Process of Making them Unemotional
- 3. Dealing with Mandated Dates
- 4. Other Emotional Conversations
- 5. Questions and Answers



#### What causes emotional conversations?

- Mandated Dates
- Stressed/Overworked Team Members
- Estimates That Are Not Reliable
- The Project Blame Game
- Post-Project Negotiations
- ▶ What else?



#### Examples

- That date is impossible!
- We don't have enough resources!
- ▶ I thought you said 40 hours!
- It's not my fault, the developers missed their target!
- That's a scope change!



#### My Defining Moment

## "Projects fail because of context, not content."

(Thomsett, Radical Project Management, 2002, p37)



#### Step One

- Establish your mindset....
  - Don't say the negative statement
  - Learn not to say no, instead say yes with the condition.
  - Understand the long term effect of the conversation



#### Step Two

- Get to the data!
  - Data rules all. Data takes an emotional based conversation and turns it into an unemotional fact based discussion.



#### Step Three

- Once the data is presented, accept the answer given.
  - This may be difficult, but again our focus is on the end game. Not the immediate win.



#### Dealing with Mandated Dates

- First, if possible, don't share the mandated date with the team. Not until true estimates are given.
- Don't speak in dates, speak in time, commitment, deliverables, and predecessors.
- Let the date "fall" out in a project plan.
- Adjust thinking based on the results of the project plan.



#### Dealing with Mandated Dates

- Now baseline the plan. (Very Important)
- Present the DATA to the project sponsor.
  - Be truthful and honest
  - Present options, not problems
  - Don't be afraid to ask for what you need
- If you don't get what you need, baseline the "new" plan for future reference.
- ► Track the plan and report results. Use this as a basis for the next mandated date.

#### Unreliable Estimates

- Ask all of the questions, not just how long
- Name That Tune!
  - I can write that code in 4 hours
- Define the word "done"
- Utilize PERT
  - (BC + (4\*ML) + WC) / 6



#### Stressed / Overworked Team Members

- Protect your team at all costs
- Do we have to work weekends and overtime?
- Know their utilization, be factual
- Don't forget, "Drop everything" doesn't mean drop everything!



#### The Project Blame Game

- Avoid blame, take it on yourself
- ▶ 100%/10% rule
  - "I own 100% of project failure"
  - "I share only 10% of project success"



#### Post-Project Negotiations

- Make it simple
- Avoid the blame game at all costs
- Make the business decision....do we want to do more business? If yes, eat the cost, if no, settle.



#### **Key Drivers**

- You must get to the data.
- Having facts and data turns the emotional conversations into unemotional conversations
- Invest in a system. It can range from local one user based tools to a large EPM solution such as Clarity.



Completely Updated!

THE

# PROJECT NANAGEMENT ROOK

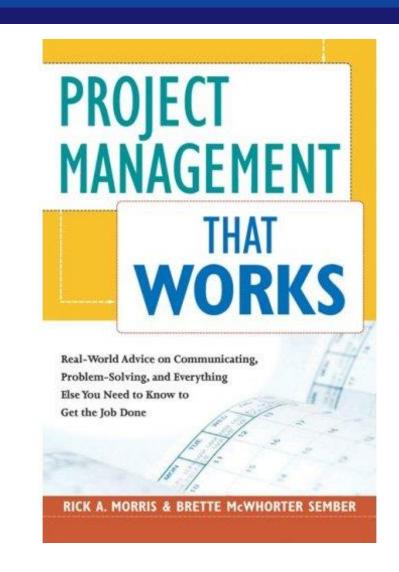
Tackle any project with confidence and get it done on time

- Create realistic goals
- . Schedule and budget each phase of a project

SIMPLE

- · Troubleshoot problems as they arise
- . Hone communication and organizational skills

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### Questions?