Project Management Institute® Sydney, Australia

25 YEARS

The Critical Path
June 2022

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Project Management Institute, Sydney, Australia
25 YEARS

Editor's Note
Himadri Chowdhury

June not only signifies the halfway mark of the year, but also the end of the financial year, triggering a slew of EOFY deals at the shopping centres and online retailers, the opening of ski slopes in the Snowy Mountains, and, for the Chapter, the Annual General Meeting time.

Our AGM was held on 21 June with active participation by our members both online and offline. The Board presented how we performed in 2021, and what's being planned for the year ahead. Check out the News section for more details.

Another important day is the World Environment Day on 5 June. Climate change has become a part of the mainstream discourse now with almost everybody today aware of the dangers it poses to flora, fauna and humans, starting from the Great Barrier Reef in Australia to the snowy plains of Ladakh in India. And the remarkable election success of the Greens and the Teal Independents goes on to show that Australians are likely more concerned today about the issue and want positive changes and accountability on the part of the government.

The newly-elected Federal Government has confirmed an election pledge to cut down carbon emissions by 43% as compared to 2005 levels, by 2030. To make this target, several things have to improve and change, including power plants, transmission lines, energy storage facilities and the vehicles we drive. Only time would tell whether this is a sustainable target given the status of our energy infrastructure, but there is a visible intent for positive change. The last few weeks of June have shown the pitfalls of moving too fast too soon, and it would be interesting to note how the current energy challenges are met while still laying the foundation for the future.

In this issue of The Critical Path, a couple of our columnists touch upon the theme of Environment. In Ibrahim Dani's column, he elaborates that Environmental management is not just about the 'trees and bees', but also about health, safety, profits, conservation, quality assurance, reduced risks to reputation, and increased global competitiveness. In ProjectizeMe, Dr Louis Taborda gives an interesting take on the topic, talking about the project environment and positive changes.

In our lead article in June, passionate learning consultant and coach Nadja Conaghan talks about how important adaptability and resilience are skills to master and improve upon post the tail-end of the pandemic. Leo Coco, on the other hand, took a long, hard look at his crystal ball, and made four very interesting predictions of future trends in the Project Management space. There is also news from the Chapter and the PMI community and an invitation to participate in our photography contest.

We would love for you to contribute to the future issues of our newsletter. Please connect with us at newsletter@pmisydney.org or marketing@pmisydney.org.

Best,
Himadri Sekhar Chowdhury
Editor, The Critical Path

Post-COVID Survival Skill: Resilience vs. Adaptability?
Nadja Conaghan

COVID has impacted and changed everyday life, especially work. For many project managers and professionals that means losing contracts or jobs, parked or unfinished projects, massive scope changes, new ways of working (i.e., virtual meetings and working from home arrangements), budget restraints, loss of clients, challenges in leading and motivating the project team, communication challenges, and much more. The pandemic has shown us how crucial it is for the "survival and success" of the individual, (project) teams and even entire organisations to be resilient and adaptive.

Adaptability and resilience are buzz words these days. Often you can see these two concepts as requirements in job descriptions across different professions and industries; you may have been asked about your adaptability and resilience in a job interview. But what does that mean to be adaptable or resilient? And what is more important post COVID?

Resilience vs. Adaptability

According to American Psychological Association (APA), resilience is defined as...
"...the process and outcome of successfully adapting to difficult or challenging life experiences, especially through mental, emotional, and behavioral flexibility and adjustment to external and internal demands. A number of factors contribute to how well people adapt to adversities, predominant among them (a) the ways in which individuals view and engage with the world, (b) the availability and quality of social resources, and (c) specific coping strategies. [...]" [1]

As per this definition of resilience, adaptive skills are part of resilience. In other words, the essence of resilience is the process of successfully adapting to adversity, challenges and difficulties. Furthermore, APA defines adaptive skills as "abilities that enable one to meet new challenges, such as the ability to adjust to a new environment and to learn new things. Adaptive skills also involve self-management, such as the ability to control one's impulses." [2] Both, adaptability and resilience, are skills rather than traits, i.e., you can "learn" to be more resilient and adaptable.

Nadja is the founder and director of Great Minds United assisting high-performing teams and individuals to reach their full potential while staying resilient under pressure.

She is an organisational psychologist and a passionate learning consultant and coach with over 10 years' experience in leading high-performing teams, training design, workshop facilitation, project management and organisational change and development.

Why are these skills important during and post pandemic?

We live in an everchanging world where we encounter adversity, uncertainty and new challenges more frequently. Resilience and adaptability are universal life skills that help us to navigate through these uncertain and demanding times and be "successful" in adjusting to challenges and overcoming adversity without compromising on (physical and mental) wellbeing and health.

How to build resilience?

Aligned to the APA definition of resilience, resilience strategies and tools may be divided into the following categories:

Ways in which individuals view and engage with the world

People who adapt a "growth mindset" and have a positive outlook and attitude towards adversity and challenges are more likely to be resilient and adaptable. Healthy amount of positivity makes us more attuned to see opportunities and stay persistent when encounter challenges and setbacks. People with growth mindset thrive on challenges and see failure not as evidence of lack of intelligence but as an opportunity for growth and for stretching their existing abilities. They believe that skills can be built rather as being something you are born with. Consequently, they view failure and setbacks as a learning opportunity. Growth mindset embraces the flexibility of mind and abilities which is aligned to the concept of resilience being a dynamic process. Growth mindset is a powerful resilience strategy:

• People with a growth mindset view stressful situations and challenges as less threatening but rather as an opportunity. Instead of avoiding the situation, they seek the opportunity to test themselves (and their skills, knowledge and strategies) and learn in order to reach their full potential.

• People with a growth mindset view and treat setbacks, negative feedback and failures as an opportunity to learn and grow. They actively reflect and use the lesson learned to develop new skills and strategies to overcome adversity, solve problems and move on.

Availability and quality of social resources

Our support network is the biggest resource we have as human beings. Our network may consist of mentors, supporting leaders and peers, family and friends, and (professional) community. Especially, project managers and professionals can benefit from being part of a professional community and group to professionally develop (technical skills and soft skills), grow and seek solutions and support from their peers and likeminded people.

Specific and effective coping strategies

According to World Health Organization, (work-related) "stress is the response people may have when presented with work demands and pressures that are not matched to their knowledge and abilities and which challenge their ability to cope." [3]
We use coping strategies to reduce the gap between the demand and available resources, thereby reducing perceived stress and any associated negative emotions that arise. According to Lazarus, there are two types of coping strategies – adaptive and maladaptive. [4] [5] Most coping strategies are adaptive in the short term, i.e., they provide an immediate reduction of this perceived gap.

Maladaptive coping strategies (also referred to as negative coping) focus on immediate relief from the negative feelings of threat or harm in the attempt to regain control, without necessarily addressing the source of the stress nor the problem. Therefore, maladaptive coping strategies focus on avoiding rather than solving the problem in favour of short-term emotional regulation, while the gap between the demands and resources is not reduced and may even be widened, which may result in greater perceived stress. These negative coping strategies can be cognitive (denial) or behavioural (disengagement). Typical behaviours include avoidance, overeating and drug use. [4] [5]

Only coping responses that bring about more enduring changes are those that are generally viewed as being successful or adaptive. Adaptive coping strategies usually involve taking action and/or finding resources to deal with the problem, including planning and seeking out information or emotional support from others. [4]

How to show adaptability?
The core of being adaptable is the ability to adjust to new environments and the ability to learn. Adaptable people are constantly learning and willing to take risks in order to develop personally and professionally. [6] Similar to resilience, growth mindset is linked to adaptability. They embrace new ideas and ways of working if they see the benefits; they meet change and challenges with excitement and positivity. In other words, they are curious and persistent learners and change advocates on your projects.

Final thoughts
In conclusion, adaptability and resilience are deeply connected and desirable skills in and post COVID. Trying to decide which one is more important is like choosing your favourite child. Each child is unique, but they have more in common and complete each other.

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Beyond Project Management
Ibrahim Dani

You Will Do Well When You Do Good

The aim of my 'Beyond Project Management' corner is to broaden the circle of concern of project managers beyond the traditional scope, quality, cost and time constraints. There is no doubt that these constraints are important and **necessary** to have successful projects, but they are **not enough**. There are other factors and considerations that influence the **real success** of projects.

When I train aspiring project managers, I always remind them that while it is important to deliver successful projects as perceived by their sponsor or influential users, however, no matter how successful the outcome is, it is not **really** successful if you complete the project and leave behind a 'trail of blood'. It is the obligation (rather than the responsibility) of you, as the project manager, to ensure that you don't deliver a successful project at **any** cost; but deliver a successful project at the **right** cost. Your success scorecard should include, in addition to the standard triple constraints, a measurement of your team's happiness when you complete the project, as well as how much your project has increased your organisation's ESG score: the Environmental, Social, and Governance score. In other words, you can measure how **well** you have done by including a measurement of how much **good** you have done.

Project Managers, as influential champions of change in their organisations, should include **Environmental Management** in their project management activities among other things. Environmental management is not just about the 'trees and bees' but also about health, safety, profits, quality assurance, reduced risks to reputation, and increased global competitiveness. Neglecting environmental costs could lead to several undesirable consequences which will jeopardise the original objectives of the project. Underestimating the environmental impact of the project will increase the risk of bad reputation which might turn out to be more costly for the project. Policies, guidelines, and plans merely show the way how to practice good environmental management. It is ultimately the actions taken by the project manager that matters the most when it comes to environmental sustainability.

With the increased autonomy given to project managers over the **what** and the **how** of project delivery, it is important for them to hone the skills of environmental management.

Ibrahim Dani is an accomplished business leader with extensive experience in managing programs and leading people. Ibrahim had a colourful career journey including speaking at PMI EMEA Congress and training aspiring Project Managers. He is an advocate for excellence, a trusted adviser, and a thought leader in project delivery and related human capital management.

They should develop a deep understanding of environmental issues and understand what protections and preventive measures are necessary for their project. Such environmental duties include conducting research necessary to the environmental impact of the project, communicating with environmental agencies on relevant risks or issues identified by the project, and ensuring continued compliance with environmental procedures throughout the project activities. Project managers should use their influence to make project changes based on environmental data. They can do this by showing that they are focused on optimising business value and enhancing the organisation's ESG score. Organisations with higher ESG score are more attractive to do business with, and easier to attract and retain quality employees, which will lead to an enhanced reputation; all things that organisations want for themselves.

In addition to continually considering environmental concerns in their risk management activities, project managers need to look beyond the normal procurement processes to see if there are any environmental considerations. Project managers can and should question how raw material (if any) is sourced and procured, what is the waste from using such material, and what happens to the material when the project is completed. They can also include a criterion in supplier selection on the supplier's environmental profile.

A single project manager may not influence the organisation's ESG policy, but collectively, project managers can make a difference and add value. Project managers can influence senior leaders. They are instrumental in achieving strategic goals because they hold the path to execution.

Project managers are conveniently placed to **do good** and **make a difference**. Just do it.

Coco's Corner
Leo Coco

Project Management Trends for 2022

If you are out there and are reading up on what's happening in the marketplace, you will have likely heard about some predictions of future trends in The Project Management space.

Based on my experience currently in the workplace and my own reading/research, I believe that the following areas are worth keeping an eye on in relation to future trends in project management.

1. Fully Remote Project Teams

We survived the coronavirus health pandemic which forced many organisations to re-think their work-from-home policies. As a result, we are seeing many workers shifting to working from home either full or part-time. This means project management is no longer confined to a typical office scenario but was it ever....

For team building exercises it is less time-consuming and effective when done face-to-face, but remote working has helped organisations to attract and retain top talent who can work from anywhere in the world.

Technology plays a huge role for this new trend with meetings held via Zoom, Teams or Google Meet and tasks tracked in a cloud-based project management tool delivered to team members entirely online.

Project Managers need to find ways to work more efficiently and leverage technology to provide more options to engage with talented people in the market.

2. A Focus on Enhanced Collaboration

Maybe the real digital transformation for project management might be complete by the end of 2022. I mean the fact that we are relying on online tools for collaboration and coordination between our teams, and not just the usual complex back-and-forth email exchanges.

With the new flexible (remote/hybrid) working options allowing teams to work wherever they want, while potentially employers also benefiting from the higher quality output from their workers. Irrespective of the advantages of distributed teams, it can be quite challenging to promote collaboration among the employees.

Project Management Authority, Trainer, Entrepreneur and Speaker, there are many facets to Leo Coco, our PMISC Director. He has seen it all – from fast-paced corporate environments, to public enterprises touching millions. Decades of experience have given him an almost uncanny ability to home in on the latest trends in the market and predict changes that are coming. In this column, Leo gives our readers a ringside view of how the world of Project Management is changing around us.

For this reason, many companies have started implementing online project management tools to communicate, plan, schedule, and monitor progress across all active initiatives.

No matter what tools you choose, one thing is for sure, that learning how to work well with our team's despite of potential physical barriers will continue to be essential as the world continues to deal with the current global health pandemic.

3. Understanding different types of Soft Skills

Project Managers typically need a certain level of expertise in various areas of expertise or domain areas to be successful in their roles. However, without the right combination of soft skills, they may not be able to effectively manage and motivate people to produce the best results.

The ability to communicate expectations and work well with all stakeholders is critically important. For this reason, soft skills such as empathy, decision-making, conflict resolution and leadership are critical to a project's success. A project manager who has these skills plays a critical role in uplifting the entire team's performance as both a role model for behavior and setting the tone for overall workplace culture.

So how do you stay ahead of the curve and improve your own soft skills? Here are some tips for you to practice:

• Don't make assumptions about what others are thinking or expecting.
• Always encourage discussions and document project details in writing.
• Encourage employees to be themselves, express their personalities and contribute to project planning with their ideas.
• Create authentic deeper level connections with the individual team members and find out about their life outside of work.
• Learn to apologise when you're wrong and resolve any conflicts for yourself and for others.
• Always be open to feedback. This is the key for you learn and improve.

4. Emphasis on avoiding Physical and Mental Stress

Based even on my own experiences currently, I predict we will be more challenged by employee development than employee retention. Meaning we will need new team members to settle in faster with optimised onboarding so that work can be delegated to new team members sooner.

Avoiding physical and mental stress will be a large part of keeping employees happy, healthy, and on your team. You may not realise this, but there are a lot of different ways you can make work better for your entire team. Here's some ideas:
• Set clear expectations with goals and deadlines for what they are working on allowing your team members to plan.
• Offer more flexible hours as its important to allow your team members to work without being monitored. Also allow at least one work from home day per week.
• Make fitness/exercise part of your workplace culture so your team takes time out to exercise. Maybe organize a daily lunch time walk with your team.
• Offer more praise than criticism - Great managers and Leaders recognise the efforts of their team members. Congratulate them on a great job in private or make a small announcement about their achievements during a weekly meeting. Small acknowledgments can make a big difference in how they feel.

In summary, being receptive to your team and the changing world we live in is critical for you to even notice any emerging trends. As Change Advocates by default, Project Delivery is built on the premise of continuous improvement and the fact that as we learn through getting things right and wrong. Let's see how 2022 plays out for you! To Your Success.

Project Management and Experiential Learning
Louis Taborda

When learning project management, it is easy to focus on project concepts, definitions and techniques while diminishing the all-important organizational context that establishes the project's business environment - not to mention provides the funding, resources and support systems that contribute to successful project outcomes. To reinforce the role of "project environment" in my classes I use the analogy of a seedling (the project) sprouting and being watered by a gardener (sponsor) while the ground represents the organization itself, providing the nutrients necessary for growth.

It is not a perfect analogy, but it does reinforce the fact that a project's success is not entirely within the control of the project manager, or even a supportive sponsor. Success can be determined by the organizational culture, the leadership styles, even factors like the competitive landscape – there are some externalities that play a part: a seed can fall on fertile or rocky ground.

The profession does not want to dwell on these externalities as it goes against the accountability we place on the PM for project success - but that does not make them less relevant to the role. In fact, it shows the importance and complexity of the PM role. If one aims to make the seedling grow and eventually deliver its bounty (value) then we would be smart to work the soil to improve its fertility. And this is where things get interesting! How much can (or should) a PM challenge, and ideally influence the organization that is feeding the project - and the PM's family?

Dr Louis Taborda is a project professional and passionate educator at the School of Project Management, University of Sydney. He is also founder of Projectize.Me a start-up Social Enterprise. All the views expressed here are his own.

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Being part of a profession that has prided itself on delivering the project scope, whether that be specifications, requirements, user stories or more generally user expectations, we are maturing as a profession to realize that the PM cannot be solely responsible for project success. We have a responsibility to advise, challenge, negotiate, caution, and influence the originators of the project – in a way that does not get us fired!

I present this to my students as an exciting time to be a PM, where the role requires more soft-skills and emotional intelligence to be able to speak truth to power. To be more than an "order-taker" who simply delivers within a pre-set Iron Triangle – to accept barren ground as our lot. Instead, to become more the trusted leader and advisor on tuning the project lifecycle to optimize value delivery – tilling the ground to better support future crops.

I present this to my students as an exciting time to be a PM, where the role requires more soft-skills and emotional intelligence to be able to speak truth to power. To be more than an "order-taker" who simply delivers within a pre-set Iron Triangle. Instead, to become more the trusted leader and advisor on tuning the project lifecycle to optimize value delivery – tilling the ground to better support future crops.

Our job can sound cool, right? We do not have to accept the barren environment we are provided and can instead till the ground to better support future crops. That is the challenge for the next generation of PMs. Of course, we always had the ability (or is it responsibility) to negotiate the triple constraint and now a PM is often at the pointy end of a transformation or strategic change, it should embolden us to help guide and direct these changes in a way that delivers value for the business.

A similar realization was behind the Agile Manifesto and the adoption Agile principles is to recognize who is best placed to lead the business in critical circumstances. In this new order, the PM needs to similarly step-up. Irrespective of the chosen approaches or techniques for delivery, the role needs to evolve to become more of a voice, advising on change initiatives; consulting on their execution, and most importantly, establishing the necessary groundwork for project success.

If you feel you have at least partially attained this level of respect and influence in your organization, then you can turn to that other externality, that consideration which is easy to overlook in the rush for short-term goals. I am of course talking about the ENVIRONMENT – that thing which is everywhere around us and so should similarly be a consideration in every project's scope.

Chapter News - June 2022

PMI Sydney Chapter Annual General Meeting 2022

The Annual General Meeting (AGM) for the Sydney Chapter was held on 21st June 2022 at the Castlereagh Boutique Hotel. PMI Board members, fellow members and volunteers attended the annual event on site and online.

Omer Iqbal, President, and Executive Director at the PMI Sydney Chapter chaired the meeting. His remarks highlighted the achievements of the Chapter in Financial Year 21-22. Despite the challenges brought by the COVID0-19 pandemic, the Chapter had come out of probationary status and emerged strongly with a good standing. The Treasurer Wayne Smithson confirmed that the Chapter is well-positioned financially for the upcoming financial year.

Himadri Sekhar Chowdhury, Director of Marketing, shared the achievements of the Marketing and Communications team and the targets for the future. The Board also gave a hint of things to come like the upcoming events for fellow members and the 25th anniversary of the Chapter to be held on 12 August.

Chapter News - June 2022

Evening Event - The Role of an Integrated and Optimised Project Management Plan in Achieving Project Success

Dr Moe Mojtahedi presents this evening event, which will explore the components of a proper project management plan and the integration and optimisation of components to achieve better outcomes in managing a project. Register at the link below:
https://pmisydney.org/events/evening-events/pmisc-28-july-2022-evening-event-the-role-of-an-integrated-and-optimised-project-management-plan-in-achieving-project-success

Photography Contest

Send us your photos taken in and around Sydney for a chance to win a cool mug with the PMISC logo. You have a better chance of winning if the photo celebrates any facet of project management. Five best entries win every month. All entries to be sent to marketing@pmisydney.org with the subject line "PMISC Photography Contest". Remember to send high-resolution photos in JPG or PNG.

Speaking at PMI Sydney

Are you ready to inspire others? Tell us what you're passionate about. PMI Sydney Chapter is looking for volunteers to be speakers in 2022 events and participate in panel discussion. Please contact Mulalo Mudau at membership@pmisydney.org and Omer Iqbal at events@pmisydney.org to take part in 2022 events and panel discussions.

Contributions Wanted for the Newsletter

The PMI Sydney Chapter Newsletter Editorial Team is requesting your contributions for our monthly newsletter, The Critical Path. News, Views, Opinion Pieces, or Articles, all are welcome. We would also be happy to hear about the content you'd like to see in the newsletter.

Please reach out to marketing@pmisydney.org with your contributions or suggestions.
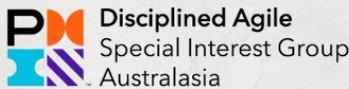
Chapter News - June 2022

Agile Governance and Disciplined Agile
23 June 2022
5.30pm – 6.30pm AEST | 7:30pm – 8:30pm NZST

This talk will explore some aspects of IT Governance and how it's value can be achieved through agile practices and teams. The talk will discuss ideas, considerations and practices organisations can use to apply effective governance without the side-effects of bureaucracy.

Topics that will be explored include: Why Lean IT Governance? What is the Lean Governance mindset? Why do traditional governance strategies fail? How do you govern agile and lean delivery teams successfully?

PMI Disciplined Agile Special Interest Group Australasia

PMI Project Management Institute. New Zealand

Novavi focused renewal

Agile Governance & Disciplined Agile

Thursday, 23rd June - 5.30PM AEST | 7.30PM NZST

Speaker
ALDO RALL

Contact Us
DASIG@melbourne.pmi.org.au
Free. Registration Required.

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DASIG Volunteers Wanted

The DASIG is growing and looking for volunteers to join us. Please visit the link below for more information, and check VRMS for Volunteer Opportunities:

https://www.linkedin.com/posts/da-sig-australasia_volunteers-dasig-communitybuilding-activity-6907850128590528512-HqdP?utm_source=linkedin_share&utm_medium=member_desktop_web

We're Growing!

Join us on the journey in growing the Disciplined Agile community in Australasia!

Explore volunteering opportunities that fit your skills and interests today.

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Membership Updates
Sydney Mudau

Following is the list of members who celebrated either 3, 5, 7, 10, 15 or 20 years of association with the PMI Sydney Chapter between April and May 2022. We thank you for your association, support and advice.

PMI Sydney Member	Years of Membership
George Awad	3
Shane Pretty	3
James Deacon	5
Franklin Wang	5
Stephen Lacy	5
Amanj Goran	7
Simon Sisavanh	10
Ludwig Martin	10
Vera MacDonald	15
Robert Ahrens	20

Sydney is a self-driven and motivated individual with a passion for learning and growth. Sydney enjoys steering the membership portfolio to serve PMI Sydney Chapter members.

He is a firm advocate for continuous improvement and passionate about sharing project management best practices with the wider Project Management network.

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Photo of the Month
Alvin Mani

About the image

Alvin Mani submitted this image with the following caption: *"Several successful project delivery strategies have been executed from this very place over the last couple of years"*.

Alvin is the first winner of the PMI Sydney Chapter monthly photo competition. For entry details, see page 14 of this month's edition of The Critical Path. Congrats Alvin, a shiny new PMISC mug is headed your way!