

## PM WORLD TODAY – VIEWPOINT – JULY 2010

### The Birth of Project Intelligence

By **Peter Taylor**

Author of “*The Lazy Project Manager*”

*‘It's not that I'm so smart, it's just that I stay with problems longer.’ Albert Einstein*

There are probably as many definitions of intelligence as there are experts who study it. Simply put, however, intelligence can be described as the ability to learn about, learn from, understand, and interact with one’s environment.

This general ability consists of a number of specific abilities including:

- Adaptability to a new environment or to changes in the current environment
- Capacity for knowledge and the ability to acquire it
- Capacity for reason and abstract thought
- Ability to comprehend relationships
- Ability to evaluate and judge
- Capacity for original and productive thought

Environment in this definition has a wider meaning that includes a person’s immediate surroundings, including the people around him or her. Environment in this case can also be something as small as a family, the workplace, or a perhaps a project team.

A project, as we all know, is a temporary endeavor, having a defined beginning and end (usually constrained by date, but can be by funding or deliverables, undertaken to meet unique goals and objectives, and usually to bring about beneficial change or added value. The temporary nature of projects stands in contrast to business as usual (or operations), which are repetitive, permanent or semi-permanent functional work to produce products or services.

But what if you combine 'intelligence' with 'projects', what would you achieve? Well a successful project manager certainly needs to address the specific intelligence abilities:

- Adaptability to a new environment or to changes in the current environment - projects are all about delivering change and the ability to oversee such change requires a great degree of adaptability.
- Capacity for knowledge and the ability to acquire it – projects also require a continuous learning process to understand the change that is being delivered, the lessons that are there to be learned. The combined knowledge of the core and extended project team offer the best platform for project success.
- Capacity for reason and abstract thought – logical application through the methods of project management will deliver a degree of likely success, the ability to 'think outside the box' and supply beneficial adaptations to process and solutions will deliver the rest.
- Ability to comprehend relationships – projects are all about people and the relationship of people with other people.
- Ability to evaluate and judge - such is the essence of project leadership and decision making.
- Capacity for original and productive thought – problem resolution and the comparative analysis of options is a constant need in good project management.

So in all aspects the project demands the intelligent project manager.

But what else is required to support successful project delivery, not from the individual's perspective but from the organisation as a whole?

Here we can introduce a new term that refers to these requirements; Project Intelligence.

Project Intelligence (PI) refers to the skills, processes, technologies, applications, metrics and practices used to support successful project delivery from the organisation as a whole.

Common components of Project Intelligence include:

- Project Management skills, maturity and certification (from project contributor through to senior project (or program) roles)
- Project Methodologies and practices
- Project Management Information Systems
- Project (or Program) Management Office (PMO) activities and focus (supportive, directive, controlling)
- Executive/Management skills, maturity and experience in project delivery
- Project based organizational maturity
- Project Support technologies (Resource Management, Skills Database, Scheduling and Time Management, Invoicing or Cost Management)
- Project Dashboard and Reporting technologies

Project Intelligence aims to support a project based organisations successful project capability.

Whilst we may believe we understand all of these components of PI perhaps we should explore a few of them in some detail.

For example, many organizations have a growing capability in project management skills but in contrast many do not specifically train beyond the project management role. They don't develop great project sponsors, nor do they train people to undertake objective lessons learned activities.

More and more organizations have in-house project methodologies and then don't explain to their sales force what it is about, or align the methodology with their product development team.

Executives in general have acquired project knowledge – well let's be honest here, it tends to be project experience and usually 'experience' of a painful type – but few will come close to understanding the mechanics and skills of being a project leader.

And the deployment of project dashboards is, sadly, often a means to either move swiftly away back to safe operational issues if the dashboard looks 'green' or raise a lot of unhelpful noise when the dreaded 'red' appears; just when the project needs all the positive help it can get.

Project Intelligence is all about having the very best environment to nurture and deliver project success through the needed skills, processes, technologies, applications, metrics and practices. Our project managers deserve the very best support that we can give them and Project Intelligence is what they need.

*'If your project doesn't work, look for the part that you didn't think was important.'* Arthur Bloch

## About the Author:



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Despite his title of 'The Lazy Project Manager', **Peter Taylor** is in fact a dynamic and commercially astute professional who has achieved notable success in project management, program management and the professional development of project managers: currently as Director of a PMO at Siemens PLM Software, a global supplier of product lifecycle management solutions. He is an accomplished communicator and leader; always adopting a proactive and business-focused approach and he is a professional speaker with City Speakers International. Peter is also the author of '*The Lazy Project Manager*' book (Infinite Ideas 2009) – for more information - [www.thelazyprojectmanager.com](http://www.thelazyprojectmanager.com) - you can also subscribe to a series of free podcasts on iTunes (The Lazy Project Manager).